

The Unprepared – Chapter 1 – Getting Past That Part

The month before, Gary had gotten Dr. J to write all of his prescriptions because he'd run out of refills and about twice a year he just got new scripts. This script was put up; he'd just gotten his last refill on all of his scripts. When he'd gone to the doctor this time, he apologized and said that he'd mislaid the script and that he needed another. Last time, he'd explained to Dr. J that it was easier to buy 60 days at a time and the Rx had been written for a 60-day supply of each drug with 5 refills. The duplicate was written the same way. He now had prescriptions for a 2-year supply of prescription drugs. He'd also hit up his other Dr., the sitar player, in exactly the same manner, giving him 4 Rx's each good for a 1-year supply. Plus, he'd switched medications on one drug and both doctors had loaded him up with samples of that drug on both visits to each.

His trust fund had finally managed to get all of their medical bills paid and for a change, they actually had a little extra money. Not much, but some and by God, Gary intended on getting prepared. So, he had Sharon take one prescription to Wal-Mart, the second to Walgreen's the third to Costco and the fourth to Von's. They'd done exactly the same thing on Sharon's prescriptions and by the time they were done, they had an 8-month supply of everything sitting on the kitchen table. The checkbook was badly bruised, but what the hell. In the event of any emergency, they'd have enough prescription drugs on hand to get them to the point that the system started to operate again. The following month, they kept the doctor's appointments and after finding out that they were healthy, had scored a lot more samples.

Gary had Sharon drag him around town until he found a portable generator that he liked, a Troy-Bilt model 1925, 7,550-watt portable generator on its own cart. It was available from Lowe's and cost about the same as the Onan model 6000E that Costco had and the Onan cart was optional. The Troy-Bilt generator had a 7-gallon tank and was rated at 8-hours at half load. But, the Onan generator gave 9-hours of power at full load on 10-gallons of gas, so he bought the Onan generator and skipped the cart. That took care of their 'extra' money for that month. The following month it would be time to refill 4 sets of prescriptions each so they wouldn't be buying anything else. But, that didn't mean that they couldn't shop. Sharon liked to shop and Gary didn't, unless of course it was for survival equipment. They shopped until Gary dropped, but by the time he was stove in, he'd pinpointed everything else he wanted to make their home 'secure'.

The most likely disaster they faced in Palmdale, CA was an earthquake. Tornados were rare to the point of being big news when one occurred, even if it was only a waterspout offshore. The nearest volcano was several hundred miles away, and they were well inland in case of a tsunami. The Pacific storms that occasionally blew in during the winter didn't do much more than drop some rain or snow on the Antelope Valley. Gary's preparations list included: food (including water), shelter, clothing, prescription drugs, protection and fuel.

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Gary surfed the web looking for a solution to his fuel problem. He couldn't buy dozens or hundreds of 5-gallon gas cans, they were expensive. Finally, he stumbled across the website of a company that manufactured and sold farm fuel tanks. Their largest held 560 gallons and could be purchased with a high (80") or low (36") stand. He ordered the large tank with the low stand. 560-gallons of gasoline would give him 504 hours of run time for his generator. He figured that he didn't need to run the generator all of the time, only enough to keep the refrigerator and freezer cold, maybe one-quarter or one-sixth of the time. Assuming one-quarter time, or 6-hours a day, would give him fuel for 84 days, while one-sixth time, or 4-hours a day, would give him fuel for 126 days.

In the period of six short months, they'd added a 24-month supply of drugs (8-months at a crack, 3 times), less the 3-month's supply they'd consumed, and were due for refills in another month. One month they'd added the generator and another, the fuel tank. The third they bought food and fuel. In order to fill the fuel tank, Gary had bought 10 5-gallon cans and they added fuel to the tank at the rate of \$100/50-gallons at a time. When the tank was full, he refilled the 10 gas cans to give them extra fuel for the Skylark or the generator as the situation warranted. PRI-G had been added to the 5-gallon cans as they were filled, assuring that all of the fuel was stabilized. PRI-G had the benefit of giving him about 5% greater fuel economy, adding extra days to his runtime for the generator.

Still, while comparing his list to their actual preparations, he realized that they were unprepared. They didn't have water to last for any great time. A place called tank depot had a 2,400-gallon water tank that he could sit on the front patio slab and hook into the waterline from the street. Month 7 went to putting in that tank and having it plumbed. They had so many drugs on hand, that they only filled one set of prescriptions each starting with the 8th month and the remainder of the money went into food. This left Gary and Sharon with a single category on his preparedness list that hadn't been addressed, protection.

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Protection can be defined in many different ways: protection from the elements, protection from disease and protection from people. Sharon suggested that they refinance the house and use the extra money to put in a shelter in the back yard and make some necessary improvements to the home. They decided to put in 2 of the 8'x8'8"x20' American Safe Rooms shelters. They could add 2 rows of 5 bunks in each of the 20' long shelters, giving them sleeping room for 20 people. But, it wasn't cheap. The two shelters, installed, came to \$32,936 + delivery which was \$2.25 per mile. Extra features really raised the cost: entrance tunnel \$7,664, best advanced sewage system \$2,529, battery backup system, \$2,045, generator shelter \$2,625 and 20 bed frames, installed \$7,160 and mattresses \$3,900. Plus a Onan 15kw propane generator with built in 100amp transfer switch. \$4,395. Total cost was \$72,079 plus shipping. That worked out to \$3,604 per head, plus shipping, of course. And, because Gary didn't agree with those folks at American Safe Rooms, he wanted all 20 bunks installed in the second shelter. Couldn't do it, physically, but that's what he wanted.

The house was valued at \$230,000. They took out an 80% loan, or \$184,000 less what they owed on the previous loan, \$94,000, leaving them \$90,000 to spend on the project. The shelter ate up \$72,100, leaving them \$17,900 to spend on the home and other things. It cost \$11,000 to re-floor their home with Pergo original, leaving them with \$6,900 to spend. Gary bought 2 Mini-14 rifles, 2 Loaded M1A rifles, 2 Mossberg 590A1 12-gauge shotguns and 6 .357 magnum revolvers. The remainder was spent on magazines and ammo. Derek picked up some 30 round PMI brand blued magazines in packages of 4 each at \$120 per package and some M1A magazines at \$20 each. Gary ended up with 12 mags and 2,000 rounds of ammo per rifle per rifle plus 250 rounds per revolver, and 500 rounds per shotgun before he ran out of money. He had to get into some of their regular income to do it, but it was done.

Even though the new loan was at a reasonable interest rate, it doubled their house payment. They already had the house insured for full replacement value and they weren't going to tell the LA County Assessor about the appraisal value on their home. The 560-gallon fuel tank was buried next to the shed. The water tank was emptied and added to the shelter. The first shelter was connected to the entrance tunnel and it also contained the deep freezer, installed before they installed the entrance tunnel into place. They now had a place to go in case of a tornado, earthquake that destroyed their home or in case of nuclear attack. Gary added their backup supplies of food, storing them under the lower bunks.

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When they had extra money again, Gary added a second 2,400-gallon water tank. The rule of thumb was that you needed 50-gallons of water per person per day. 20 people meant 1,000 gallons of water a day and there was no way that was going to happen, regardless. Assuming the worst possible event, like a nuclear attack for instance that kept them in the shelter for 3 weeks, the water allotment would be $4,800 \div 20 = 240$ -gallons per person $\div 21$ days = 11.4-gallons per person per day. Those 11.4-gallons would have to cover their drinking water, cleaning and toilet usage.

This, in turn, meant that they had to prepare for people getting sick and they added Imodium AD to their medical supplies, along with an assortment of antibiotics from the Vet supply store. It also meant that the next trip to Dr. J saw them getting booster shots for everything he had. Gary and Sharon made 2. Amy, Audrey and Udell, Jr. made 5. Lorrie, David and the 5 boys made 12. That would leave extra room in the shelter and Gary gave Ronald McDonald a call when the project was completed.

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“What’s happening partner?” Ron asked.

“Been getting prepared for the end of the world, Ron,” Gary replied, “You have to stop by and see what we’ve done.”

“Lay in a little food, did you?” Ron asked.

“Uh-huh,” Gary replied.

“Buy a rifle and a generator?” Ron continued.

“Uh-huh,” Gary again replied.

“Build a bomb shelter?” Ron went on.

“Yes and no, didn’t build it, but we got one,” Gary chuckled.

“Well, I’ll stop by one of these days and see it,” Ron said.

“Yeah, like you stop by all of the time,” Gary said. “Hell, partner, I’ve almost forgotten what you look like.”

“I don’t get out much anymore,” Ron said. “You know how it is, with Linda’s dad and all. Besides, we have all 3 kids living at home again.”

“That’s my line Ron, at least you drive,” Gary countered. “We have Amy and her two living with us, so I can understand having a house full. I’ll tell you one thing, if we ever do have to use that shelter, those 2 kids are getting tranquilizers.”

“Aw hell, Gar-bear, I’ll run over now before Linda finds something else for me to do,” Ron laughed.

“Wow,” Ron said, “This is quite the shelter. How many people can it hold?”

“It has 20 bunks, Ron,” Gary explained. “We need 12 and that leaves 8 left over for other people.”

“I don’t see a stove,” Ron observed, “Going to live on MRE’s?”

“Electric stoves are inefficient and I put in a microwave and 3 electric frying pans and 2 electric pressure cookers,” Gary explained. “We can use the pressure cookers without the lids as an electric sauce pans. An electric stove doesn’t make much sense with only a 15kw generator, but I did put in a pair of 2 burner hot plates, just in case.”

“All electric, huh?” Ron said.

“Yeah, it’s a bomb shelter,” Gary remarked.

“What do you have for a generator?” Ron asked

“Onan, Ron, but,” Gary continued, “there’s a tank and LP to be considered, too.”

“You can rent a tank,” Ron said.

“Can I rent propane, too?” Gary asked.

“Not hardly, but I’ll talk to a bud and see if they can work out a payment plan of some sort,” Ron said. “But, I wouldn’t get my hopes too high.”

Ron talked to a friend at AmeriGas and the best he could get them to do was to install a larger underground tank than they typically put in residential locations. Typically, they only went up to a 1,000-gallon tank in a residential location, but he got them to install a 3,300-gallon tank. This would give them about 1,250 hours minimum run time and Gary had that 6kw unit for later. The problem then became filling the tank. Gary and Sharon started out with 1,000 gallons and added 250 additional gallons per month. And, without being asked to do so, Ron moved about ½ of his gun collection and 6 folding cots to the shelter. One day he showed up from a run to Costco and they emptied both of their cars into the shelter and then went back for what they needed.

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“Gary,” Clarence’s voice came over the phone, “Haven’t talked to you in a long time, how you been doing?”

“I can’t remember being this tired or this broke, Clarence,” Gary explained. “We put in a shelter and such plus had our home re-floored with Pergo flooring.”

“I’d sure like to see that shelter,” Clarence said, “Mind if I come over?”

“I’ll put on a pot of coffee, friend,” Gary said, “See you in a while.”

“Hmm, I notice that you have 20 bunks plus some cots, can this place handle that many people?” Clarence asked.

“I think so, there are 40’x8’8” or 346ft² of floor space, Clarence,” Gary replied. “I don’t know where I read it, maybe Utah Shelter Systems, but the Swiss only allow about 10 square feet per person. Anyway, Ron brought those 6 cots over plus ½ of his guns and 2 carloads of food.”

“Well, if I could do the same thing, you know, a couple of cots and some food, could Lucy and I join you in the event of an emergency.”

“Sure, but forget the cots. Could you bring about 6 folding card tables?” Gary asked. “With 2 folding chairs per each? I’m out of money and we don’t have any tables and chairs.”

“You got pots and pans, plates and silverware?” Clarence asked.

“6 services for 4 in Melamine and some cheap stainless steel,” Gary replied, “Guess I’d better add more plates and silverware.”

“Don’t bother,” Clarence said, “I’ll get that. Show me what you have for food and I’ll get stuff to complement your selection.”

When they’d finished Clarence wrote up a list and showed it to Gary. “That will round things out nicely,” Gary thought.

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“Go for it buddy,” Gary said. “Mind if I ask you a question?”

“Not at all,” Clarence said, “What do you want to know?”

“How are you fixed for guns?” Gary asked.

“Got a 12-gauge for hunting and a .38 for self-defense, why?”

“Most of our ammo is 5.56, 7.62, .357 and 12-gauge,” Gary explained. “You got a short barrel and magazine extension for your 12-gauge?”

“Nope, think I should get one?” Clarence asked.

“Up to you, but it would be better than cutting off your hunting barrel,” Gary observed.

Clarence made a few notes and asked, “Is there anything else?”

“One site I saw recommended having at least a 100 day supply of all of your prescriptions,” Gary pointed out. “Sharon and I have well over a year’s worth of everything.”

“How’d you manage that?” Clarence asked.

“Got each of my doctors to write me 2-month scripts for everything I take,” Gary explained. “Did the same for Sharon. Then, I told them that we lost the prescriptions and got duplicates. That gave 4 me Rx’s and Sharon too. We filled them at different pharmacies. Easiest way to do it is to take your prescription bottle to the doctor and ask him to write 60 day supplies for everything. If you have 2 doctors, you can have prescriptions that give you 8-month’s worth of drugs every other month.”

“I’ll do that, but it’s going to be expensive,” Clarence commented.

“Get all of the doctors’ samples you can, too,” Gary advised.

“What did you buy in handguns?” Clarence asked. “Single actions or double actions?”

“Double action S&W .357 7-round revolvers, model 686P in stainless,” Gary replied and showed one of the guns to Clarence.

“Ok, I’ll see what I can do in that department, too,” Clarence said.

The Unprepared – Chapter 2 – A Common Goal

Now that the three old friends were working towards a common goal, they found they spent more time together and it didn't take long for Ron and Gary and Clarence to start riding each other's butt in a good natured sort of way.

"Hey uglier than me," Ron said, "How's it going?"

"Nobody is uglier than you, partner, you've got the wrong number," Gary said.

"Don't you hang up on me butthole," Ron said, "Like I said, how's it going?"

"Fine," Gary replied.

"That bad, huh?" Ron retorted, assuming Gary meant Fricked-up, Insecure, Neurotic and Emotional.

"The other fine, butthole," Gary chuckled. "Clarence brought 6 card tables and 12 chairs so we have someplace to eat. Said he'd get a short barrel for his shotgun and asked about the revolvers I bought. I think I screwed up though, with all of the bunks down and the cots up there's no aisle to go to the john at night."

"So, I'll bring the cots home," Ron said.

"Can't do, partner, or someone will be sleeping on the floor," Gary pointed out. "Look, my family is 12, yours is 5, Clarence and Lucy are 2 and Chris and Patti are 4. That makes 23 people in a shelter with 20 bunks, so we have to use some of the cots."

"How we going to manage that?" Ron asked.

"We'll put Audrey and Junior in one bunk and Jeffrey can sleep with Lorrie," Gary said. "That will free up 2 bunks right there. So, maybe we'll only need one cot. Now, if you have some money to spend, I can suggest a couple of things we need."

"As long as it doesn't break me," Ron said, "What do you need?"

"Contact Radmeters4U.com and get one of their package deals," Gary suggested. "Plus get 20 extra dosimeters and 20 extra bottles of Potassium Iodide. Each adult needs one bottle and each child ½ bottle. The package comes with 2 bottles, so that will cover the 3 kids."

"What all is in the package?" Ron asked.

"A survey meter, 2 bottles of pills, 3 dosimeters and a dosimeter charger plus some books," Gary replied. "Actually, we'd be better off having 2 bottle of Potassium Iodate for the kids."

Ron went to the website and checked it out. He figured they needed a spare everything, so he bought 2 kits, 2 bottles of KIO_3 , 20 extra dosimeters (3 spares), and 16 bottles of KIO_3 . When he received the order, he took it over to Gar-Bear.

“Two of everything, huh?” Gary laughed. “You’re as bad as I am sometimes. What do we want Clarence to buy?”

“What do we need?” Ron asked.

“A couple of Ma Deuces would be nice,” Gary laughed.

“What do we need that he can get?” Ron persisted.

“Probably nothing, he’s spending his extra money on prescriptions,” Gary pointed out. “Hey, how are you stocked on drugs? You need a minimum of a 100-day supply of everything, and possibly more of things like insulin for Kevin.”

“Guess I’d better get some prescriptions,” Ron replied. “How are you fixed on your prescriptions?”

Gary explained the 2-month sized bottle and the 4 prescriptions he’d finagled. They had over a 1-year supply of everything he assured Ronald. After which they got to visiting about why they were getting so prepared.

“You expecting a bunch of terrorists to strike?” Ron asked.

“Anything is possible Ron,” Gary explained. “We could have the ‘big one’ or that reactor over at Diablo Canyon could go on the fritz and give us a ‘Three-Mile Island’. Yellowstone could blow its top anytime in the next 100,000 years. The Gulf Stream could stop and cause a mini ice age, too.”

“You forgot to mention us getting hit by an asteroid,” Ron laughed.

“Well, I didn’t mention tornados, floods or tsunamis either,” Gary said. “Think about it, what would the worst disaster that we might possibly survive be?”

“How about an asteroid striking the earth just off the western coast of the US causing a massive tsunami and triggering a massive earthquake along the San Andreas Fault which in turn triggered an eruption of Yellowstone?” Ron suggested.

“I said something we could survive,” Gary laughed.

“Any type of radiation disaster or storm,” Ron began, “Earthquake, abrupt climate change, mini ice age. Shall I go on?”

“We aren’t prepared for an abrupt climate change or a nuclear winter,” Gary said.

“What would we need?” Ron wanted to know.

“Heirloom seeds, winter clothing, and a lot of luck,” Gary replied. “We need stuff with short growing seasons.

“So what do you think would be the most likely disaster?” Ron asked.

“Earthquake or some sort of terrorist attack,” Gary replied. “The thing that bothers me more than anything is that power plant in Diablo Canyon. They say it’s earthquake proof, but I don’t know, as I believe whoever ‘they’ is. Other than that, I suppose that an abrupt climate change is possible because the Gulf Stream is actually slowing down.”

“I was talking with Clarence about the same thing,” Ron shared. “He thinks that we’re going to have a major earthquake one of these days, but he didn’t mention it taking out San Onofre or Diablo Canyon.”

“I suppose you both think it’s stupid to put in a bomb shelter so close to the San Andreas Fault, huh?” Gary asked.

“Well, yes and no,” Ron answered. “The upside is that everything we need is stored in one place. The downside is that if you get any liquefaction, we might not be able to get to it.”

“Checked that out, partner,” Gary responded. “The liquefaction hazard for your home and mine is zero and I’m pretty sure that Clarence’s house is about the same. The thing that will get us is being so close to that danged fault. If it slips anywhere around here, it could shake our houses down in a New York minute. Might be the only place we have is that shelter. For sure we’re going to need that propane ‘cause I got an earthquake shutoff valve on my gas supply.”

“When did you get that?” Ron asked.

“I didn’t, Sharon did,” Gary explained. “That was back in my second childhood days. She bought the ‘best’ valve money could buy. So, maybe the house won’t burn down.”

“Did either of your neighbors get valves?” Ron asked.

“I don’t think so,” Gary replied.

“Your house will catch fire when they burn down,” Ron laughed.

“Probably, but so will yours,” Gary chuckled.

“Yeah, I suppose so. If an earthquake is the most likely hazard, why did you bother

modifying that standby power system to run off of either type of fuel?”

“Well, I could be wrong,” Gary admitted. “If we use it as a bomb shelter, we can’t get out to switch it over. So, all we have to do is flip a switch and that circuit is powered by the same battery that starts the generator.”

“That makes sense,” Ron agreed.

“Say, partner, do you still have that box of CB radios?” Gary asked.

“Yeah, there must be 5 or 6 in that box in the garage,” Ron acknowledged, “Why?”

“Ran out of money before I got radios bought,” Gary explained. “Mind storing your CB’s in the shelter until you need them?”

“I could use the room in the garage,” Ron smiled.

“Got antennas for them?” Gary asked.

“Only a couple, they usually went with the vehicle so I didn’t have to patch the hole,” Ron explained.

“That’s ok, I’ll find a ground plane and mount it for the shelter,” Gary suggested.

“They’re all mobile radios,” Ron pointed out.

“Oh, then I either need a 13.8 volt power supply or a base station,” Gary noted. “Bring them anyway, partner, if something happens, we’ll need them.”

“I got to get going,” Ron said, “I been sitting here gabbing with you all afternoon. I’ll bring the radios over tomorrow.”

“Later,” Gary acknowledged.

What Gary did was get his hands on a Recycler and by the time Ron showed up the next day, he had a used Uniden Washington 40 channel CB with AM/SSB plus a Solarcon Imax 2000 with the ground plane and an old 39’ Radio Shack telescoping mast. They went to a store and picked up a couple of guy wire kits and a 2’ piece of water pipe that just fit inside of the mast, according to Gary’s measurements. When they got back to Gary’s and confirmed the pipe was the right size, they located the geographical center of the back lawn and drove in 18” of the pipe. Next they attached the guy wires and mounted the antenna. Finally, they slipped the mast over the pipe and slowly began to telescope the sections, starting with the top one. Clarence showed up just in time to keep the whole thing from tipping over.

Sharon, Amy and Patti each got on a guy wire and steadied the thing until it was fully

extended. The whole thing was over 60 feet in the air. Patti held a level on the mast while they tightened the guy wires, starting with the bottom 3 and then doing the upper 3. The RG-213U was clamped to the mast with cable ties that were snug, but not too tight. Ron had been up on the ladder and he'd put one every 3' to keep the cable from flapping. Once they had the guy wires snugged down about right, Gary found the antenna pipe that extended from the shelter and ran the cable down below. Edison powered the shelter when the transfer switch wasn't tripped. A few minutes later, they were listening to people yapping on I-14.

"I'd have to have something a little better if I had more than one antenna," Gary said, "But that's just going to have to do. Did you tighten the lead from the Alpha Delta Lightning arrester to the mast real good?"

"Yeah, what's that for?" Ron asked.

"So if that lightning rod up there get hit, it goes down the mast instead of the wire," Gary explained. "I also put an antenna switch in the circuit and the lead is grounded unless we're using the radio."

"I suppose you want me to mount CB's in the cars," Ron inquired.

"Up to you partner, but I'm going to put one in mine," Gary said. "I got looking around the garage and found my old CB."

"Is it SSB?" Ron asked.

"Nope."

"Then use one of mine, I always went first class and they're all AM/SSB," Ron explained.

"Thanks, I'll do that," Gary accepted. "I've got to go find a Wilson 5000 mag mount for my car. You want to drive me?"

"What's a Wilson 5000?" Clarence asked.

"About the best car antenna they make for CB's," Gary replied.

"I'll come along too, assuming Ron is going to loan me a CB," Clarence said.

"I got 6 radios and 3 cars so I guess I'd better," Ron agreed. "Why don't we get the antennas and take in a meeting? We can stop by the gun store and see what new stuff Sandy has in."

"Did you get that barrel yet Clarence?" Gary asked.

“Ain’t gotten around to it yet,” Clarence explained.

“Well, here’s your chance, partner,” Ron remarked, “She probably has everything you need in stock.”

They picked up 2 CB antennas and caught a meeting at the Palmdale Group. After, they stopped by the gun shop and Clarence picked up a barrel and an 8-round magazine extension kit. Gary explained to Clarence that he’d just have to take off the barrel on his 870, remove the spring retainer and spring, insert the new spring and screw on the magazine extension. Clarence talked to Sandy about a S&W, but didn’t buy one. As a whole, they were reasonably prepared for most any disaster. But as it turned out only in the physical sense, no one was prepared for what was about to happen. Every once in a while, the 3 old geezers guessed something right.

The Unprepared – Chapter 3 – There’s A Whole Lot of Shaking Going On

Fortunately, the Gulf Stream was still flowing on Monday, January 17, 2005. No terrorists had made any attacks that anyone knew of and no one had spotted a meteor, comet or asteroid heading towards earth. Except for the fuss in Iraq over the elections there, it was starting to be just another winter day in sunny southern California. Had the earthquake come about 3½ hours earlier, it would have happened precisely 10 years to the day and hour of the 6.7 magnitude Northridge earthquake. Perhaps to make up for being tardy, the quake slipped a section of the San Andreas Fault starting directly west of Lancaster on the fault and extending to Ft. Tejon near Gorman, a distance of about 40km. The slippage generated an earthquake with a magnitude initially estimated at 8.1 by the USGS in Pasadena and confirmed as at least 7.9 by the USGS in Golden, CO.

Occasionally, an earthquake is preceded by a precursor, in this case a 6.2 west of Lancaster around 3 minutes before the main temblor. Gary ended up on the floor of his bedroom when the precursor hit and he quickly dressed and got everyone else moving. Sharon, Amy and the kids were still pulling on clothes as they headed to the backyard. They were in the middle of the lawn not far from the radio mast when the real earthquake hit. It lasted for about 90 seconds although anyone of them would have told anyone else who asked that it seemed like an eternity. When he could get to his feet, Gary descended into the shelter and started running down his checklist. 1. Switch generator to propane-done, it had been left set on propane the last time they ran it. 2. Cut off the water supply to the shelter until water status known-he flipped a switch closing a valve and cutting off the external water. 3. Locate family and get them in the shelter-done, Sharon, Amy, Audrey and Udell Jr. we sitting on bunks. 4. Remove extra items from house-he stopped and started down the tunnel. All he had to do was get to the kitchen; all meds were stored in 2 Tupperware containers right by the kitchen patio door. Forget it, the house was either down or too unsafe to approach given the lighting conditions. 5. Check on Lorrie, Ron and Clarence-he returned to the shelter and the phones were down.

“Hey Gar-Bear, got your ears on?” the CB squawked on channel 23.

“10-4, partner, where are you?” Gary asked.

“We’ll be there in 5-10 minutes,” Ron said and stopped talking.

“Brother Clarence, you out there?” Gary called on prearranged channel 23, and getting no response.

In case it isn’t obvious by now, the mast was still standing. About 5 minutes later, Chris, Patti, Matt and Daniel entered the shelter followed moments later by David, Lorrie and their brood. They were no sooner in the shelter when the first aftershock hit. It lasted about 15 seconds and Gary guessed it went about the same as the precursor, around 6.0.

“Clarence, you got your ears on?” Gary tried again and again got no response.

“We’re here,” Ron hollered as Linda, he and Kevin entered the shelter from the 20’ entrance tunnel.

“Where are Brenda and John?” Gary asked.

“Working (they both worked as guards on the JAG set),” Ron replied.

“Clarence doesn’t answer,” Gary said, “I suppose Kevin and you, David and his 4 boys and I had better go check on them, they could be trapped.”

“We’ll have to take 2 cars and 47th east is a bear with all of the light poles down,” Ron explained.

“Fine, 4 to a car and get some shovels out of my shed,” Gary suggested.

When they got there, Clarence and Lucy’s house was down hard and Lucy was sitting on the front lawn

“Where’s Clarence?” Ron asked.

“Inside the garage trying to get the door open,” Lucy explained.

Ron grabbed an axe and they cut a hole in the garage door because that door wasn’t going anywhere.

“Clarence, you in here?” Ron yelled.

“Over here Ron,” Clarence replied weakly.

Ron shined his light and located Clarence. Two of David’s boys helped Clarence out to the lawn. He was shaken, but not seriously hurt.

“Ron, can you get my trunk open?” Clarence asked. “All of my extra drugs, my guns and my BOB in it.”

“I’ll have to pry it open,” Ron said.

“Just do it and we can get to Gary and Sharon’s,” Clarence advised.

No sooner had they emptied Clarence trunk than another aftershock hit, and it was almost as big as the first. He checked Clarence and Lucy as best they could, loaded up and headed for the shelter. Clarence complained of pain in his arm and shoulder and for a minute they were worried he was having a heart attack. But, it turned out to be his right arm and shoulder where he’d been struck by the garage roof when it caved in. As

luck would have it, when the precursor struck, Ron quickly backed both of their cars out of the garage and almost to the curb. They'd taken time to throw food in a couple of boxes, get the rest of Ron's guns and some clothing.

Once they had everyone in the shelter, they examined Clarence closely. He was going to be badly bruised, but it didn't appear that anything was broken. Sharon got him a couple of these re-freezable ice backs from the freezer and a towel to insulate his skin. It was obvious from the outset that 23 people in this shelter would be full capacity. Gary plugged in an AM/FM radio and scanned for news. Nothing came in that he could pick up. Gary decided that they'd better check the TV; he'd run a line from the cable box to the shelter. Adelphia wasn't on the air meaning no TV. He grabbed a spool of wire and got Ron to help him hang a dipole antenna between the mast and one of the patio support posts that hadn't come down. With this arrangement, after he fished the antenna lead down the antenna pipe he was able to pick up a couple of LA stations.

Amy had brewed an urn of Navy coffee and after they got coffee, they huddled around the radio trying to find out what the status was. They heard the EAS tone and everyone perked up, expecting an announcement about the earthquake.

At 6:26am a 6.1 magnitude earthquake occurred on the San Andreas Fault due west of Lancaster, California. The jolt turned out to be a precursor of a larger earthquake that occurred at 6:29am. The magnitude of the second quake was about 8.0 on the Richter Scale, depending on the reporting entity. The larger quake cracked a water reservoir at Diablo Canyon reactor number 2 forcing a reactor scram. However, due to a loss of coolant and damaged to the containment building some radiation has escaped from reactor number 2. Everyone along a line extending due east from the Diablo Canyon power station and 50 miles north and south of that line should immediately evacuate or seek shelter...I repeat, at 6:25am...

"Ron. I've got to try and get our meds out of the house," Gary said, "Some of you give me a hand."

With a few strong backs to move some rubble, they got the med boxes from near the door and Gary's supply of insulin from the refrigerator in the kitchen. It looked like they had a good chance of moving the refrigerator to the patio so they cleared some debris and moved it outside. Gary grabbed an extension cord from the shed and powered it from an outlet mounted above the generator shelter. Not surprising, the refrigerator's compressor kicked in. They emptied the refrigerator and covered it loosely with a tarp to keep any possible fallout off. Then they went back to the shelter, sorted the meds and dug out the equipment Ron had gotten from RadMeters4U.com. Even at the lowest setting, they weren't picking up any radiation yet.

Although Gary didn't need the meds because all of their extras were stored in the shelter, he didn't want to leave them exposed to the elements and any possible radiation. They posted Josh near the entrance hatch and told him the minute the Survey meter started to click to lock the hatch and return to the shelter. It sure was a good thing that

Ron had bought all of that stuff from RadMeters4U. Gary hadn't figured they'd need them, but you couldn't have too many supplies or too much equipment. Earlier, Gary had grabbed his gas wrench and turned off gas all along his block when he had the chance. It was just a metal strap with a notch cut in it that he'd picked up from a door-to-door salesman for \$3. He also pulled the main fuses in the breaker box until they could clean up the mess. Most of the houses were down.

Ron and Kevin went after their dogs and cats and Patti managed to corral their 2 cats. Apparently most of the people in the tract had taken off for the Civic Center in response to the radio broadcast, or so they assumed. A quick tour around the tract hadn't generated any responses so the people were probably buried under their homes or gone. All that is except Dick. They ran into him up near the front of the tract shutting off the main gas valve. Gary asked him what he was going to do and Dick didn't know so Gary invited him to use the shelter too. Neither of Dick's 2 travel trailers had been damaged and he had pulled them into the street and parked them along the cubs near one-story homes.

About the time everyone made it back, Josh started to get higher readings on the Survey Meter and they buttoned the place up.

"You know Chris and Patti, Dick, and that short fat guy is my friend Ron Green," Gary said making introductions. "That's his wife Linda and the tall guy is Clarence Rawlings and his wife Lucy. The people in their 20's and 30's are Ron and Linda's kids and you know my kids, right?"

"I do, say this is quite the shelter," Dick remarked.

"After we can get out of here, we'll try and salvage that Comet tri-bander antenna I gave you," Gary said. "Are your 2-meter radios buried in your house?"

"I grabbed my radio and threw it in the pickup," Dick replied. "It didn't look like that antenna was damaged. How long do you figure we'll need to stay in this shelter?"

"Until the Rad level is down to zero point one rad per hour," Gary answered. "But, we'll keep an ear on the radio since the only way we can check the outside radiation level is to crack the hatch."

"Are those Geiger Counters?" Dick asked.

"Survey Meters," Gary explained. "Same thing with a higher range. Different electronics is all. When you get bored, I can give you a book to read."

Over the course of the next 7 days, the number and strength of the aftershocks slowly diminished. The three old geezers studied a topo map of the area and decided that they must have been 20 or more miles from the epicenter west of Lancaster; 25, more likely than not. Most of the area around the epicenter was uninhabited with the exception of

Mojave, Rosamond, Lancaster and Palmdale. One area, Antelope Acres, was moderately populated and few buildings were standing, according to the radio. Eight days after the event, the radio announced that the radiation level had diminished to a point where the 100-mile wide zone along the line east from Diablo Canyon was no longer quarantined.

The Survey meter confirmed that there was only about 35mR of radiation, nearly the normal background level of 30mR. They now had a chance to assess the damage to their properties. Moon Shadows was the furthest from the fault and no building was completely down, however, every home had sustained some damage. Gary and Sharon's home had lost the patio covers and the roof section over the area outside the kitchen patio door. The house was off kilter and none of the doors would open. Entrance was gained through the shattered patio door to the kitchen that they'd broken out earlier to get the meds and move the refrigerator. The house didn't appear to be safe to occupy, but they could recover their possessions.

Dick's 2-story home was a little the worse for wear as were all of the 2-story homes. Apparently the LA County Sheriff had erected a barricade to keep out non-residents of the tract, but there was no patrol car to enforce the restriction. During their confinement, Gary had brought out a copy of the USGS document titled 'USGS Response to an Urban Earthquake-Northridge '94'. He'd read the document but hadn't downloaded. It could have been called Anatomy of an Earthquake because of the detail included in the document. At one place, the document said, "Continuing efforts to reduce the threats of earthquakes in an effective and practical way requires knowledge of the levels of hazards in different areas. Future earthquakes are most likely to originate where strain surrounding a fault has built up and has not yet been released in earthquakes. In southern California, for example, scientists estimate that the probability of a magnitude 7 or greater earthquake by the year 2024 is as high as 80%-90%."

Well, you could make that 100% and up the magnitude by a full point to 8. They shouldn't have another major earthquakes of that magnitude in the next 3-4 lifetimes, maybe more. Apparently the San Andreas Fault had a cycle with a major quake occurring once about every 130 years. Ron and Kevin returned to report that their house would have to come down and be rebuilt. They already knew that Clarence and Lucy's home was a total loss. They dug out 2 6' tables from Sharon's sewing room and brought the folding chairs up from the shelter. About that time, a truckload of soldiers stopped at the front of the tract, removed the barricade and the soldiers began to make a pass through the tract.

"Anybody here?" a voice called out.

"We're in the backyard," Gary shouted.

They had an abundance of animals, Ron and Linda had 3 dogs, a Sheppard and 2 Shelties and Gary and Sharon had Missy, Baby, a German shorthair mix, and Scrappy, a terrier mix, plus 8 cats. The dogs were generally friendly, but they didn't know the sol-

dier who called out and Ron had to go open the gate and escort the 2 soldiers back.

“You folks are going to have to evacuate this housing tract,” the Sergeant said.

“The radio said we could come out of our shelter, that it was safe,” Gary countered.

“It’s safe from radiation, but there’s a gas hazard,” the Sergeant said.

“No there’s not,” Dick responded, “I work for Southern California Gas and I turned the gas off at the street the day of the earthquake.”

“Well, I’ve got my orders,” the Sergeant said.

“Ron, let’s get our things from the shelter,” Gary said.

They got their ‘things’ all right. They got their 5.56’s, 7.62s and 12-gauge shotguns and returned to the surface, creating an immediate Mexican Standoff.

“The bank and my wife and I own this property Sergeant,” Gary said, “And you seem to be trespassing. These other folks are family or friends of mine. The way I see it, you can leave this property or leave this world, the choice is strictly yours.”

“We’re under orders to evacuate everyone who needs help,” the Sergeant insisted.

“Fine, we don’t need any help,” Gary said. “We’ve got electricity, water, sanitation and food. We also have the ability to protect the property.”

Clarence had his shotgun, Ron and Kevin had .223 bolt-action rifles, David and his boys shared 2 shotguns, 2 M1A’s and a Mini-14 and Gary was holding a Mini-14. It was basically that infantry squad against 9 determined looking armed men. But, there were only 2 soldiers in the backyard and even Tango, Ron’s German Sheppard looked like he was ready to eat one of them. No guns were pointed, but the implication was certainly clear.

“I’ll have to report this,” the Sergeant said.

“You do that because you’re going to have to leave to do it,” Gary snapped. “If we need anything, we’ll let the guard at the entrance know.”

“How did you know we’d put a guard at the entrance?” the Sergeant asked.

“I assumed that you’d keep us bottled up until you got orders,” Gary explained.

“I’ll be back,” the Sergeant said.

“I sort of imagined you would, Sergeant,” Gary smiled. “We’ll have some sun tea in about an hour.”

“That was real smart, Gary,” Clarence complained. “The Army will be back and put us all in jail.”

“They can try, Clarence,” Gary said, “But I’m not going anywhere while I can stand on these 2 feet.”

Authors Note:

Frugal sells KIO_3 on this website at a very good price. The only reason I bought my KIO_3 from KI4U was because Ron was already buying 2 of the sets and it was convenient. If all you need is KIO_3 , give Frugal a try. He’s a bit cheaper than KI4U, too. One final point, KI is very bitter and children are better off with KIO_3 because it tastes better.

The Unprepared – Chapter 4 – Aftershocks

I'm referring to the confrontation with that soldier, not to the earthquake. The Sergeant talked to his Platoon Leader and the Lieutenant talked to his Company Commander. The Captain decided to pay the folks at Moon Shadows a visit.

"Anybody here?" the Captain called out.

"Wait a minute while we corral the dogs," Gary shouted.

Once that was done, Gary, Ron and Clarence walked to the gate and let the Captain and Sergeant in. The Three Amigos were all carrying handguns and either a M1A or a shotgun (Clarence). They walked back to the backyard and took a seat at one of the tables. Before the Captain could open his mouth, Amy poured both of the men a glass of sun tea and pointed to the sweet and low and packets of sugar.

"What, no lemon?" the Captain asked.

"Fresh out," Gary replied, "Local emergency, you know."

"I understand that you declined to leave. My name is Captain Saunders," the Captain said.

"That's a strange first name; did your mother not like you?" Gary asked.

"Donald Saunders," Saunders replied. "We could force you to move, but before I push the issue, why do you want to stay?"

"I assume that you already have your hands full Captain Saunders," Gary replied. "I have a bomb shelter and it is equipped with a generator, has water and sanitation. We have plenty of food and are armed. Dick works for the gas company and has turned off the gas to the housing tract. We'll go around and turn off each gas valve independently or cap the lines. I don't see why we can't stay here and protect the property."

"Mind if I check out your shelter?" Saunders asked.

"Help yourself, but watch your step, Captain," Gary replied. "I'm not paying any insurance claims if you slip and fall."

A few minutes later the Captain and Sergeant emerged from the shelter.

"How much fuel do you have for the generator?" Saunders asked.

"I'll look," Gary said. He removed the blast cover from the tank fill valve and checked the meter. "We have 2,132-gallons of propane left in the tank."

“Water?” Saunders asked.

“About 2,400-gallons,” Gary replied.

“Well, I’ll let you stay for now,” Saunders replied. “But if you run out of anything, you’re going to have to move to the shelter the city set up.”

“We’ll be sure to let those guards on the entrance know,” Gary assured him (lied).

After they left, Gary decided they’d better check and see if they had any water pressure on the city water line. They didn’t but when he checked Chris and Patti’s house, they did. Which didn’t make a lot of sense because if Chris and Patti had water pressure, they should too. He could only conclude that somewhere in those 130’ between their homes the water line must be blocked. They gathered up water hoses and refilled the empty water tank. It was cool, but not cold out until the sun went down. So, towards sunset they all returned to the shelter and closed the hatch to keep it warm.

After they’d eaten they discussed their insurance coverage. Ron and Clarence’s homes were total loses and Gary was pretty sure his was too. After the Northridge quake almost broke some insurers, they stopped writing earthquake coverage in several states. California had an insurance program but it had a 15% deductible. With their home 80% financed, Gary and Sharon could replace the home and cover the deductible or sell it like it sat.

“I don’t know about the two of you,” Clarence said, “BUT, I’m going to have my home rebuilt and sell it without even moving back into it.”

“We ought to do the same thing, Ron,” Linda suggested.

“I wouldn’t mind getting out from under our house,” Sharon added.

“Then you shouldn’t have crawled under it,” Gary laughed.

“You know what I mean,” Sharon snapped.

“What we ought to do is tear everything out and put in manufactured housing,” Gary said. “There’s probably an ordinance against that. But, if we rebuild the home and sell it, we’ll be out money. They’ll only cover 85% of our loss and we have an 80% loan. That leaves us 5% to work with and the real estate commission would be 10%, putting us 5% into the hole not considering appreciation. Now, if we clear the lot, remove the shelter and sell the land, the 10% will only be on the selling price of the land and we can break even or make a few bucks.”

“How do you figure that?” Ron asked.

“Let’s say it costs \$150,000 to replace that piece of crap house,” Gary explained. “The earthquake insurance pays \$135,000. Then, we sell it for \$230,000 and pay the bank \$184,000, the contractor \$15,000 and the realtor \$23,000. We only clear 8 grand. Now let’s say we can clear the lot for \$7,500 (probably low) and we can sell the bare improved land for \$80,000. \$135k plus \$80k is \$215k less \$184k plus \$7.5 k plus \$8k leaving us \$15,500. And, if we rent a truck and demolish the house ourselves, we can probably get by for about \$3,000 giving us an extra \$4,500 for a total of \$20,000. We’d have enough money for 20-25% down on a home in another state.”

“How do you figure \$80,000 for the land?” Ron asked.

“That’s the difference between the replacement cost of the house and the total property value,” Gary explained.

“If you’re right, it’s a better deal,” Clarence agreed, “But, if you’re wrong, you could lose your shirt.”

“The worst I can come out is even,” Gary suggested. “I’m not above just walking away. The lender will probably get the money anyway and expect me to come up with the difference. Then, they’ll finance our new home at a higher interest rate.”

“If that happened, how would you come out?” Clarence asked.

“If what happened?” Gary inquired.

“If they got the money and you rebuilt,” Clarence said.

“I’d start out owing them \$49,000 plus the cost of the new home, again assuming \$150,000,” Gary said. “Now I’d have a debt of \$199,000 on a \$230,000 piece of property. Ninety percent of \$230,000 is \$207,000 less the loan of \$199,000 leaving us with the \$8,000 less the realtor’s commission, putting us \$15,000 in the hole. “

“How’s about you let the lender take the insurance and you get a low interest rate government loan?” Ron asked.

“It would have been easier to just stand outside when the radiation came,” Gary said. “I think I’ll take the \$20 grand and just buy an acre of land somewhere and live in the shelters.”

“You’d have more room if you sold the shelters and bought a single-wide mobile home,” Ron suggested.

“Yeah, but then I wouldn’t have any protection when the asteroid hit,” Gary smiled.

“What asteroid?” Clarence asked.

“How do I know which asteroid?” Gary asked. “Diablo Canyon was supposed to cost \$600 million. They spent \$5.8 billion on it, and all of that extra money was to insure that what happened on January 17th didn’t happen. With that kind of luck, you’d better keep your eyes on the sky fellas.”

◦

“Good morning,” Ron said.

“How do you know, have you been outside?” Gary asked.

“Go back to bed and get up on the other side,” Ron suggested.

“I can’t,” Gary said, “That side is against the wall.”

“Then I’ll get you some coffee with sugar in it to sweeten your disposition,” Ron snickered.

“Did your mother have any kids who lived?” Gary asked.

“Only my brother,” Ron replied.

“Will you two cut it out?” Clarence snapped.

“We were just saying good morning Clarence,” Gary responded, “What’s the problem?”

“Sometimes Gary, you scare me,” Clarence remarked. “You took on the Army like you were King Kong and now you’re worried about an asteroid.”

“What asteroid?” Gary asked.

“You’d better stop while you’re even Clarence,” Ron suggested.

Obviously Gary was an unhappy man. And wouldn’t you know it while they were upstairs in the backyard that day, the house caught fire. There was no phone service, so Gary sent one of the boys to tell the guards to call the fire department and they got that hose that was hooked to Chris’s house and tried to put out the fire. It didn’t do one bit of good and by the time fire trucks showed up, all the firemen could do was keep the fire from spreading to the other homes. Sharon was pretty upset so Gary took her aside and told her when she had a minute to check out the shed. He’d moved her things there, just in case, he said.

“I’m sorry about your house Gar-Bear,” Ron sad later.

“I’m not,” Gary replied. “Nobody was in it and I moved anything valuable out of it.”

“Will the earthquake insurance cover the extra damage caused by the fire?” Clarence asked.

“Not a penny’s worth, Clarence,” Gary smiled. “Now it’s Farmers Insurance’s problem.”

“What do you mean by that?” Clarence asked.

“Fire destroyed the house, partner,” Gary explained. “Under that earthquake insurance law if fire destroys the home, earthquake coverage is excluded and the regular home insurance covers replacing the home. I have non-deductible full replacement value policy with Farmer’s.”

“Got a match, Gar-Bear?” Ron asked.

“Sorry, used my last one,” Gary replied. “Need a light?”

It had occurred to Gary during the night that he’d only been using 10% deductible instead of the actual 15% deductible in the examples he’d made to Ron and Clarence. Using the right figures, nearly every way he calculated it, he was going to lose money on their home. Real shame about that fire, but now he’d have a new home free of charge. He wondered how it got started. Couldn’t have been arson; that was a fell-o-knee. You heard about Clarence’s house didn’t you? It burned the next day but the fire department couldn’t get there because they were busy putting out Ron’s fire. Good thing Ron and Clarence had Gary to alibi them, the fire department was getting suspicious.

“I don’t know about the 2 of you, but I’m getting the hell out of California,” Ron announced.

“When are we leaving?” Gary asked.

“Just as soon as we settle with the insurance company on our home,” Ron said.

“Where are we going to go?” Clarence asked.

“Lyn and I haven’t decided where we’re going, what do you two mean by we,” Ron asked.

“Gary and I were talking, Ron,” Clarence said. “We figured we’d go wherever you go, it would be a shame to break up the team.”

“Oh really?” Ron responded.

“The real question is why are you leaving?” Gary asked.

“We’d been thinking about it for a long time and between an 8.0 earthquake and all of that radiation, we just want to leave,” Ron explained.

“Ronald they shut down the other reactor At Diablo Canyon permanently and the average between quakes of that intensity is several of lifetimes,” Gary retorted. “The only thing I’d recommend is taking out that damned swimming pool you have and hate and replacing it with your own shelter. Clarence you ought to put in a shelter and standby generator too.”

“Just assuming Clarence and I did that,” Ron responded, “How big of a shelter would you recommend?”

“Clarence and Lucy could get by with a single 8’x8’8”x20’ American Safe Rooms shelter,” Gary said. “Lyn and you ought to think about either a pair like I have or one of their 8’x10’x30’ jobs. I’ll buy the extra dosimeters from you and I’m going to do something a little different on the radiation equipment.”

“Like what?” Clarence asked.

“The CD V-742 dosimeters are fine, but the CD V-715 Survey Meter isn’t very helpful inside the shelter,” Gary explained. “I think when I can afford it I’m going to get a CD V-717 which has a remote sensor with a 25’ cable. I’ll also get a CD V-715 and maybe a CD V-700 for inside my shelter. Plus, since I have 20 bunks, I’m going with 20 dosimeters.”

“Why all the radiation detectors?” Ron asked. “You said they shut down Diablo Canyon.”

“You know all of those other reactors that they shut down in California?” Gary pointed out. “Shutdown is the correct term, they all have their cores and Diablo Canyon #1 probably still will too.”

“Ron will you sell me a Survey Meter and a couple of dosimeters?” Clarence asked. “I think maybe we’ll stay.”

“Clarence, you need to add a 7.62 caliber semi-auto rifle and a 5.56 for Lucy,” Gary suggested. “Get one Loaded M1A and one Mini-14. Plus you need to get off your behind and buy yourself that new revolver or a pistol. If you’re going to buy some dosimeters from Ronald, you’re going to need a charger, etc. I think you’d be better off letting Ron keep his equipment and just buying one of those sets that Radmeters4U sells plus a CD V-717 for remote sensing. If Ron wants to unload some of his stuff, I’ll buy it. Another thing, while I’m thinking about it fellas. That place where I bought my shelter sells Generators. It may be 2nd or 3rd best, but it’s good enough. Put in the 15kw unit, if it’s not running at capacity, it doesn’t use all that much fuel. Besides, I think it’s just a 12kw unit with a different generator. And, just set it up to run on propane.”

“I’ll talk to Lyn,” Ron said, “Maybe we ought to stay in Palmdale, too.”

6 months later...

The insurance companies had settled and they finally had gotten contractors to build them new homes. As a result of the quake, Sacramento had changed the building codes one more time so these homes ought to make it through the next major quake that wasn't due for a couple of hundred years. Ron had the swimming pool demolished and put in a shelter and so did Clarence. Clarence had bought the kit from Radimeters4U plus a 3 pack from Frugal so he'd have extra KIO_3 . He'd added the CD V-717 remote Survey Meter, as had Ronald. Ron wanted to keep both Survey Meters and some of the extra dosimeters, so Gary had to buy the package deal plus the CD V-717 and a CD V-700 Geiger Counter. He also bought an AMP 200 which measured up to 10,000R/hr and was a remote sensing unit originally designed for Emergency Operations Centers.

Ron and Clarence rented 5,500-gallon propane tanks and Gary rented a second 3,300-gallon tank and had it installed next to and plumbed together with the first tank. He still had the 500-gallons of gasoline stored and kept it fresh with additions of PRI-G. The 10 5-gallon cans of fuel were also stabilized and he sold Ron and Clarence 5 each so they could have extra gas on hand. He'd gone to the Heirloom seeds dealer mentioned in an earlier chapter and stocked up on short season seeds for the vegetables they liked... Ron and Clarence had split a case of heirloom seeds from Walton Feed.

Frugal beat KI4U by about 10% on the price of KIO_3 , so Gary and Ron bought all of the extra KIO_3 from him. Having the water tanks in the shelter had been a pain in the butt so Gary sold his 2 tanks to Clarence and put in 2 larger tanks for his shelter. The same company sold a 5,000-gallon above ground tank for only a couple of hundred dollars more than a 2,400-gallon tank. They were able to finance everything by not buying prescriptions; they needed to cycle those anyway. He decided to go to a 90% fill on his propane tanks, giving him a total of 5,940-gallons of propane. That fancy toilet pump in the shelter was modified and the hand pump replaced by an electrical sewage pump.

Christmas of 2005 saw Gary getting a used Kenwood TS-2000X all band radio and an antenna. When they'd rebuilt the home, the linen closet became a bedroom closet that opened into the office, making the office a legitimate bedroom. Almost. Under the building codes, a bedroom can't open to a garage, so technically, the office was still a 'Bonus Room' but Gary knew darned good and well if they ever decided to sell the home, prospective buyers would consider the 'Bonus Room' to be a 4th bedroom. And the earthquake and fire had taken care of their perpetual problem by cleaning the garage for them. The shed was falling apart so they built a new one, this one 12' square. It almost looked like a miniature guesthouse.

The contractor had insisted on taking out the patio slabs and starting from scratch, so Gary had him cut the size of the patio to about half and put a basement under the half they replaced. He had a huge storage room, 16'x30'. The storage room was connected to the shelters via another section of entrance tunnel that hooked into the other entrance tunnel. This section was cheaper because it was shorter and didn't have the blast door, etc. Chris welded it all together for Gary, perhaps to repay them for saving

their hind ends. And speaking of Chris, and earlier of radios, Gary bought a Motorola 32 channel business radio and antenna. The radio, a VHF CM-300, could be programmed to the 2 frequencies on the radios Gary had bought Chris years earlier and left them with another 30 frequencies to play with. The matching portables acquired at oh dark thirty were the CP-200 16 channel radios with the earpiece/microphone.

How many, you ask? Well, there were four CM-300s set up as base stations, one CM-300 per vehicle and four spares (15). There were also 30 of the CP-200s with 5 6 station charging stands and 30 of the earpiece/mikes.

They were better prepared by the time Christmas 2005 rolled around, but there was still more to do. George was still fighting his war in Iraq and having those elections the previous January hadn't helped much. They'd solved the troop shortage in Iraq by moving everyone from Afghanistan and extending the length of stays to 18-months. You really had to give old George credit; he was consistent, if nothing else; and as predictable as the sun rising in the east every morning. Rehnquist stepped down because of his cancer and Dubya tried an end run. Teddy Kennedy raised hell and Alan Specter 'kept an open mind'.

Authors note: It is common to only fill a propane tank to 80%-90% full in the hot desert. Gary started with 2,400-gallons, 80%. The next time he got a delivery, both tanks were filled to 90%. The squirrels were right about the Generac. It was cheaper, all right, but you get what you pay for. It was replaced with an Onan RS-15000. You have to be careful about throwing paper matches into wastebaskets, they can start a fire.

The Unprepared – Chapter 5 – Communications

During February of 2006, Gary got Ron to help him and they installed an antenna for the HF rig, a MFJ-1798 mounted on the top of the mast. The mast had one hell of a load on it so they switched from 3 guys wires to 4 and used really heavy cable for the guy wires. They also put in a longer pipe to mount the mast on and it went into the ground 7' and stuck up 3'. It was a fairly snug fit and those extra guy wires weren't probably necessary, but better safe than sorry. Radio Shack probably never designed that mast expecting anyone to put that many antennas on it. They managed to accomplish that by clamping a 20' pole onto the mast just down from the top. The antenna for the business radio went one end and the Comet went on the other end. The second cross pole, perpendicular to the first, had the CB band antenna on one end and the Diamond D-130J on the other.

"Put it up, take it down; make up yer friggin' mind," Ron grouched.

"I need me an antenna mast," Clarence said.

"I'll sell you this one Clarence for just what I paid for it," Gary offered.

"But it's USED," Clarence said.

"It was used when I bought it too," Gary responded, "It will save you a lot of money."

"Ok, sure, but what are you going to do?" Clarence asked.

"I found a 50' telescoping mast and ordered it plus a ground mount and a 1,000' spool of guy wire," Gary said. "The telescoping mast is a guy wired push-up mast system. Each 10-foot section pushes up from inside the section below it. You attach guy wires to each 10-foot section as you push up the section and insert the lock pin. Each 10-foot section has a built-in guy wire ring, which connects to 3 or 4 guy wires. The guy wires must be anchored at equal intervals around the mast, and must be at least $\frac{2}{3}$ of the height of the mast away from the base of the mast. Once the mast is fully pushed up, and the guy wires are in place the guy rings spin freely allowing the entire mast be turned at the base for antenna alignment. It will take 4-5 guys to put it up but in the meantime, we can take this mast down and haul it to your house."

"Your backyard is going to look like a Christmas tree," Ron said. "Now before we do anything else, are you absolutely positive you want us to take this thing down?"

"If Clarence wants the mast, yes," Gary replied.

"I'll take it, Gary," Clarence smiled.

"Why don't we put in the pipe and wait to install the mast until you get the antennas?" Gary suggested.

“Already got them,” Clarence said. “All’s I needed was the mast. I got me a tripod from Radio Shack and we’re going to mount it on the roof of my house.”

“Somebody is, but I don’t climb more than 2’ off the ground,” Gary laughed.

“I’ll get Kevin and John to help us Clarence and Gar-Bear can supervise from the ground,” Ron chuckled. “I ought to get me one of those 50’ masts and mount it on top of my house on a tripod.”

“A 50’ mast supporting a 24’ CB antenna on top of a 2-story house might require a beacon, Ronald,” Gary laughed. “That sucker would be 100’ in the air.”

“Why don’t you get a tripod and we’ll mount yours on top of your house?” Ron suggested. “It will put your antenna bases about 67’ off the ground.”

“If you want to climb up there and do it, it’s fine by me,” Gary said. “I’ll call that company in Minnesota and have them send one of their roof mounts instead of the ground mount.”

“Have them ship 2 of the 50’ masts and 2 roof mounts and I’ll pay you back,” Ron suggested. “You do that and Clarence and I will get this mast of yours down and pick up the boys and get it up on his house.”

“Leave the antennas mounted and I’ll just take Clarence’s new antennas since he bought the same antennas I have. I’ll drive down later to supervise,” Gary agreed.

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After Gary got the call made, he drove down to Clarence’s. He hadn’t seen inside of Clarence and Lucy’s shelter so he made a quick tour. Clarence had been busy; he had a rifle rack with a M1A, Mini-14, a new .22 Browning rifle and his shotgun. There were gun belts hanging, one with the .38 and one with the S&W .357 Magnum. Apparently Clarence had bought one of those 1-year deluxe food supplies from Walton Feed, stored under the bunks. He only had 4 bunks in his shelter, probably to allow for his sister. By the time Gary was done snooping around and returned to the surface, they were just finishing snugging down the guy wires. Gary had seen a CB radio; something called a Texas Ranger TR696 F SSB base station. There was also a Texas Star DX 400 CB Radio Amplifier. He’d have to have a word with Clarence about that, that amplifier was illegal. Besides he wanted to know where Clarence had gotten it, he wanted one too.

“The new masts will be here in about 4 days, Ron. Clarence, where did you get that amplifier?” Gary asked.

“Some place called Wholesale CB Radio, Gary. Why?” Clarence replied.

“They’re illegal and I want one too,” Gary laughed. “Ron, have you been in Clarence’s shelter? Our partner is loaded for bear.”

“No, and what’s this about a linear?” Ron asked.

“A 400-watt linear amplifier will extend the range of a CB radio up to 10 times further, Ronald,” Gary explained. “I know it’s 100 times more powerful, but the increase isn’t exactly proportional. And, you have to watch out for those FCC Nazi’s, they don’t like people using linear amplifiers on the CB channels.”

“I’ll have to order me one of those,” Ron said. “Screw the FCC.”

“Order 2, I want one,” Gary said. “Say, do you have any high capacity magazines for your rifles, Clarence?”

“Where do I get those?” Clarence asked.

“Call Derek and send him a check,” Gary said. “In a while you’ll receive a UPS shipment of ‘magazines’. Throw the books away and put the other things in your shelter. I’ll give you his phone number and his address.”

“That’s illegal,” Clarence said.

“I know. So, store the magazines on top of your linear amplifier and it will be easier for the cops to confiscate everything all at once,” Gary suggested. “You did remember to put some paper matches in your shelter in case of another earthquake, didn’t you?”

“Yeah and I got me one of those smokeless ashtrays, too,” Clarence said. “The idea of being in a shelter for 2 weeks and not smoking gives me nightmares.”

Eventually Gary received the masts and the Diamond antenna. Chris had everything fabricated and they mounted everything before they took the mast to the roof. It was very awkward and it took 4 of them to get the mast in place. All of the utilities in Moon Shadows are underground, so they didn’t have to worry about electrocuting anyone. The greatest danger in installing antennas relates to people accidentally touching a power line with the antenna and getting electrocuted. The second greatest danger is falling off the roof. Kevin went up the ladder this time only after they’d attached the first set of guy wires and tightened them. He attached the ladder to the mast with one of those u-bolts to keep it in place while he raised the mast sections. They also attached the bottom of the ladder to the mast with a nylon strap come along. Once the mast was raised, they tightened all of the guy wires and got off the roof. The antenna leads came down the side of the house and into a pipe in the slab and into the basement under the patio. From there, they went to the shelter.

Gary didn’t go and watch them put up Ron’s antenna, tilting his head that far back made him dizzy. By the time they had Ron’s antenna up, it took 2 days, the amplifiers had ar-

rived. Gary and Ron settled up the monetary differences and Ron gave Gar-Bear a tour of his shelter. He'd gone with the 8'x10'x30' shelter and had 6 bunks installed. He'd bought a new chest style freezer and they'd put it in the shelter before welding it all closed. He'd also moved both of his cheap gun safes to the shelter. Apparently Linda didn't care for the food from Walton Feed. Ron and Linda had shopped at Nitro-Pak and had 6 one-year supplies of the Mountain House Ultimate-Pak Food Reserves. They must have spent a lot at Nitro-Pak, there was also a EMT Medic Rescue-Pak First Aid kit, a deluxe Suture and Syringe kit, and a Dental First-Aid kit. There was also an emergency childbirth kit and lots of extra bandages, sutures and supplies. Ron told Gary that since Kevin was a type-I diabetic they had all sorts of extra supplies in case he had a problem during an emergency.

Clarence hadn't gone nearly that far in supplying for medical emergencies. Gary remembered seeing a good first aid kit and their extra prescriptions, but not much else. The timing couldn't have been better for Gary to add to their supplies. He had plenty of bandages but nothing like Ron's First Aid equipment. That problem was easily remedied; all it took was a call to EMS. Between the 2 of them, Gary and Ron could handle most emergencies. AA taught that half-measures availed us nothing and Gary purchased one of those home defibrillators. Gary also persuaded Dr. J to prescribe some Ringer's, D5W and normal Saline and IV sets. By the time he had those on hand, it wasn't a half measure anymore. He took some training to learn how to establish IV's and just hoped he'd never have to use it.

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Now that the fellas were all full-fledged, card-carrying survivalists, they were spending more time together. They were getting in meetings on Monday, Wednesday and Friday's and always stopped by Sandy's on the way home. Old Gar-Bear wasn't spending any more money; he needed to save up for more ammo and accessories. They had decided that since he had the Ham license, he'd have the communication center. And, if the phones went down in an emergency they would keep in touch by CB, business band or amateur radio.

One day Clarence said something about needing 2 more bunks for his shelter. Gary offered two from his shelter. Chris, he said, could remove them and install them into Clarence's shelter and if Clarence would pay him what they cost him, he'd reimburse Chris out of what Clarence paid him. He told Clarence that he wanted more room in one of the shelters so he could put in a folding table and not have to sit on the bunks to eat if they ever had to use the shelters again. Ron said that if he could spare 2 more, he would buy them. So, Gary had Chris remove 4 bunks from the shelter with the cooking equipment and install 2 each in Ron and Clarence's bunkers.

Page 2. If the truth were known, Gary didn't want quite so many people in his shelter next time and he figured removing 4 bunks would help. His family was 12 and Chris and Patti made it 16. He had a cot if there was another emergency and Dick showed up again, but 17 people in 320 square feet made for almost 19 square feet per person, a

great improvement over the first time when they'd had 8 more people. Besides if Audrey and Junior slept in one bunk like last time, he'd have a bunk for Dick. He bought also an Icom R-8500 receiver. He would come out about even with the money he got for selling the bunks.

Ron told Gary that he would buy the old Icom radio and mount a second antenna on his roof. Gary had to ask Sharon how much she'd paid and he didn't come out quite as well as he thought he would. Sharon always found the bargains. As luck would have it, some shipping clerk at AES made a mistake. Gary received an Icom RS-8500-04 instead of an Icom RS-8500-02. The price difference was only \$80 but the receivers were vastly different. The RS-8500-04 was unblocked and subject to restricted sales. When he got a call from AES, Gary said that he'd received the 02 model so it must have been someone else. I mean hell, people who played with matches were usually pretty good liars as well. And, Gary used to work for the government, maybe close counts. It was good that his pants were on fire since it might dry them out.

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In Washington, Dubya was having a very bad go in his second term. He couldn't get anyone that Alan Specter approved of out of Committee and the war in Iraq was only getting worse. In May, George called Specter into the White House and asked Specter to give him the short list of people he would approve. It was a very short list indeed, but at least the Democrats would be happy. Bush asked Specter if he appointed one of the sitting justices as Chief Justice, would Specter help him get the candidate of his choice. Specter agreed if Bush would only choose from his list. Bush had in mind either Antonin Scalia or Clarence Thomas and after that decision on Miranda, Scalia wasn't exactly Bush's favorite. George told Specter that he was going to nominate Thomas as Chief Justice and would pick someone from Specter's list. Everyone on the list was a moderate and could properly be classified as a swing voter. Bush picked to most conservative of the lot and submitted his name.

After the hassle over getting Thomas on the court in the first place, no one wanted to be the one who was seen as opposing his nomination as Chief Justice. That, together with the fact that Bush had now nominated a moderate finally got the bench filled. However, several members of Congress began loudly denouncing the Iraqi war and it was starting to turn into another Vietnam. It seemed that the longer the thing went on, the fewer people supported it. So, rather than institute the draft to get enough forces to continue the war, Bush decided the US had won and started to bring the soldiers home. Derek got his orders cancelled just in the nick of time.

The Unprepared – Chapter 6 – Too Little, Too Late

Nixon held on to the war in Vietnam to get reelected; or perhaps he just liked breaking into filing cabinets. Ford actually ended it on 29Apr75 when almost 5,000 people were evacuated from Saigon. That's Ho Chi Minh City for you young guys. George wasn't going to be remembered as the President who started another war and lost. He went on TV and told the American public that with the Iraqi elections accomplished, continued presence of the US in Iraq wasn't warranted and that the UN was going to have to take over whether they wanted to or not. To continue to stay in Iraq would only lend credence to speculation that this war was about oil instead of terrorism. Nice speech, but nobody believed him or so CNN said. What did I say, too little, too late?

The President ordered an immediate pullout of all units to Saudi Arabia and the other countries in the region where the US had facilities that would permit returning the men, women and equipment to the United States. Under the Presidential directive, nothing would remain in the Middle East. The closest US installation would be Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

Diego Garcia, British Indian Ocean Territory is located at 7 Degrees South Latitude, off the tip of India. Diego Garcia is exclusively a military reservation located on a small host country atoll in the Chagos Archipelago. It is a living coral atoll; the coral reefs and island are made up of trillions of living organisms. Once an ancient volcano, all that is left is the atoll surrounding a central lagoon.

Thanks to its tropical location and heavy rainfall, the island is heavily vegetated with coconut palm and ironwood trees. The island has an area of 6,720 acres (roughly 10.5 square miles) with an average natural elevation of four feet above sea level. The maximum elevation is 22 feet. The island stretches 15 miles, north to south, and about 35 miles from tip to tip of its horseshoe shape, with a perimeter of approximately 40 miles.

The enclosed lagoon is 13 miles in length and 6.5 miles at its widest point. Lagoon depths vary from 60 to 100 feet with coral heads in all areas. From the air, Diego Garcia takes on the rough outline of a footprint on the ocean surface – thus its nickname “Footprint of Freedom”.

The US bases 6 B-2 Spirit bombers at Diego Garcia keeping them in those fancy shelters they came up with. It is mentioned in the article at Global Security at the end of the chapter. It isn't important now, but you might do well to remember. You know what the payload of a Spirit is don't you? 16 of this or 16 of that or up to 80 500-pound precision munitions; and some of those this and that's were nuclear. I wonder where they stored those at Diego Garcia.

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The Three Amigos were no longer the unprepared. They each had a shelter, albeit after they needed it instead of before. Ron had HF radios, but he didn't bother getting a li-

cense because he couldn't manage to memorize the questions and answers to the simple quiz you had to pass to get a Technician's License. Ron had bought both the Icom radio and the Cushcraft R-8 antenna from AES. And, as you'll recall, his antenna was high in the air. Most any radio will do, the secret is in the antenna. The jury was still out on that Comet antenna. Gary wasn't into chatting up people, but he listened a lot, mostly on the Icom receiver.

Bush's sudden withdrawal from Iraq came as a surprise to everyone. Blair rushed to pull the British troops and France and Germany weren't sure whether they supported UN involvement. Putin said that Russia was too busy fighting their terrorists. Israel wasn't happy with the US pulling out, the insurgents would take it as a sign they had won and Hamas and the Hezbollah would probably step up their attacks. Rumsfeld resigned in bitter disagreement over the President's announcement. General Myers had no comment except to say that the military would follow orders. Cheney was angry but he kept his mouth shut, too.

Back on the subject of linear amplifiers and CB radio, one should note that unless you were talking to someone who also had a linear amp he might hear you but you couldn't hear him. Gary bought one but planned to only use it in an emergency. His antenna would handle 2,000 watts, but that wasn't the point. Besides, linear amplifiers use a lot of power and attract a lot of the wrong kind of attention. If you got caught and convicted of interfering with the 10-meter band, for example, you could be fined \$10,000 and spend a year in jail, per count.

There was a lot of hardware to return from the Middle East, including about 1,500 tanks. And having made his decision, Bush was anxious for the troops and equipment to be home so the news media would stop talking about it 26 hours a day. The military was doing everything in its power to extricate the US quickly. Many civilian aircraft were pressed into service to fly the troops home. The people weren't the problem, it was the equipment; much of it had to be moved by sea.

The CRAF provides important surge capacity to United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) during contingency and wartime operations. It provides commercial aircraft and aircrews to augment active duty, ANG, and AFRC forces that, together, complete the airlift system. During peacetime, periods of regional crises, (when activation of the CRAF is not required), and exercises, CRAF participating carriers are contracted for movement of passengers and cargo. These carriers enable USTRANSCOM to meet contingency/exercise requirements and continue lower priority channel service. As the demand for airlift increases during a conflict, USCINCTRANS, upon approval of the Secretary of Defense (SecDef), may incrementally activate the CRAF according to stages based on the urgency and magnitude of the airlift requirement. Activation occurs in three stages: Stage I for small-scale contingencies, Stage II for major theater wars, and Stage III for full national mobilization. Each stage is designed to meet a specific and sequentially greater wartime requirement. Getting the troops home was a stage II event.

Operation Desert Shield marked the first time that the strategic sealift contingency planning and ship acquisitions of the eighties were tested. As Iraqi tanks rolled into Kuwait on August 2, 1990, MSC was operating its normal size peacetime fleet of 137 ships. By the end of the Southwest Asia conflict, over 500 ships were utilized in deploying troops that saw sealift move 9.5 million tons of cargo – 95 percent of all cargo transported. All aspects of our enhanced sealift capability were exercised in what has become the fastest sealift in history and largest since World War II.

Following sealift acquisition plans, MSC controlled fleet assets were first fully employed then US-flag assets were chartered. Very quickly into the acquisition process to support the Desert Shield buildup, foreign-flag charter became necessary. The most difficult ship type to acquire was quickly identified as the roll-on/roll-off ships. MSC ordered the activation of all 17 of these type ships in the RRF, and then became totally dependent upon foreign sources for the remaining number required. Despite the impressive array of contingency force ships backed up by US flag charter and the RRF, MSC still required 28 percent foreign-flag ships in the initial deployment to Southwest Asia. By the end of September 1990, MSC had chartered 37 foreign ships from fifteen nations. I wondered why it took so long to start the first gulf war. Ending the second gulf war presented similar problems, but people had read that paper that I borrowed from and in a period of 3 months, everything was headed home.

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The announcement of the withdrawal had come in August of 2006. It appeared that everyone and everything would be home before Thanksgiving. Would everyone also include some uninvited guests? DHS had cranked up the threat level one notch just in case some terrorists tried to take advantage of all of the airport and seaport traffic and sneak in. Nobody snuck in during the return of the troops and equipment because they were already here and had been, waiting for the right moment to strike.

No one had been killed as a result of the radiation leak at Diablo Canyon in January of 2005, but it did get an organization or two thinking about the possibilities of an attack using nuclear energy. A dirty bomb is a terrorism weapon, not nearly as dangerous as many people think. If you were standing next to one when it went off, the explosion would kill you. However, at worst, the radiation would cover a few city blocks. If you evacuated the area immediately, your exposure to radiation could be minimal.

The people who came to the United States knew that too. It wouldn't take much radioactive material to have the fear producing effect they wanted. However, that wouldn't repay their pain and suffering at the hands of the Americans, or so they told themselves. The word was that Osama was angry because of some perceived desecration of Saudi Arabia by the mere presence of Americans on the 'holy soil'. Go figure, sand is sand.

The perfect target in the minds of some people would be the explosion of a nuclear bomb at some place they stored large amounts of highly radioactive materials. Someplace like a fuel rod storage facility or a shutdown reactor where the fuel rods were still

in place. The US Department of Energy was working to open the Yucca Mountain site by 2010, a deadline seen as increasingly doubtful due to politics and economics. That has put PFS planning considerably ahead of Yucca Mountain; a cause for worry among officials facing the likelihood that PFS shipments will pass through their states without the level of oversight shipments to Yucca Mountain would receive.

A report circulating amongst US officials indicated that al Qaeda had considered using México as a point of entry for nuclear material to be used as weapon in USA. The TIME article made it sound rather iffy – using language like “unproved ... account” and “potential plans”. The New York Daily News quoted an unnamed Homeland Security Department official as saying “It is uncorroborated, older information” and “There is no evidence of a plot.” Anadolu Agency reported, “Despite the fact that there is no other evidence to confirm this claim, the issue is being taken seriously and was included in official reports at the White House.” But, using similar language as the TIME story, the UK Press Association specifies that “Meanwhile, US and Mexican intelligence officials were alerted to reports that other al Qaeda detainees had described México as a staging area ‘to acquire end-stage chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material’.” Agence France Presse also reports, using almost the exact same language, the reports from other detainees “US and Mexican intelligence officials have also discussed reports from several al Qaeda detainees saying that Mexico could potentially be used as a staging area ‘to acquire end-stage chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material.’”

A new book claimed that in the fall of 2002, Saddam Hussein supplied operational weapons of mass destruction to Osama bin Laden’s terrorists. The book described, in great detail, multiple source evidence about the training in fall 2002 of al Qaeda terrorists in WMD by Iraqi Military Intelligence Unit 999 at Salman Pak. The author, Yossef Bodansky, is the former director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare. He also concluded that Iraq’s intelligence services provided extensive military assistance to al Qaeda beginning in the early 1990s. He also, once again, showed that Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction, as well as most of its program to develop more, had left the country prior to our invasion. (Secret History of the Iraqi War)

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After uranium fuel had been used in a reactor for a while, it was no longer as efficient in splitting its atoms and producing heat to make electricity. It was then called “spent” nuclear fuel. About one-fourth to one-third of the total fuel load was spent and was removed from the reactor every 12 to 18 months and replaced with fresh fuel. The spent nuclear fuel was high-level radioactive waste. Spent nuclear fuel is highly radioactive and potentially very harmful. Standing near unshielded spent fuel could be fatal due to the high radiation levels. Ten years after removal of spent fuel from a reactor, the radiation dose 1 meter away from a typical spent fuel assembly exceeds 20,000 rems per hour. A dose of 5,000 rems would be expected to cause immediate incapacitation and death within one week. Some of the radioactive elements in spent fuel have short half-lives (for example, ¹³¹Iodine has an 8-day half-life) and therefore their radioactivity de-

creases rapidly. However, many of the radioactive elements in spent fuel have long half-lives. For example, ²³⁹plutonium has a half-life of 24,000 years, and ²⁴⁰plutonium has a half-life of 6,800 years. Because it contains these long half-lived radioactive elements, spent fuel must be isolated and controlled for thousands of years.

Gary had looked on the Internet and learned that there were 27 nuclear waste storage facilities in the US, not counting Skull Valley or Yucca Mountain. Rancho Seco was the storage location in California. Sure they had security but so did those embassies in Africa that Osama had attacked and blown up. You want scary, imagine a terrorist with a 1kt Russian suitcase bomb dropping it into one of those 27 storage facilities. If he didn't generate a secondary nuclear explosion, you'd still have HOW MANY EXTRA TONS of radioactive waste? And, since the explosion would be at ground level, there'd be thousands of tons of earth thrown into the air. Rancho Seco was just 25 miles southeast of Sacramento, how does Arnold sleep at night?

So a bunch of terrorists were in the US and who knows, probably armed with Russian suitcase nukes. Now, if they had the smarts to attack some of those storage facilities, the US would be in a world of hurts. Radioactive materials produced in nuclear power plants decay more slowly than the by-products of nuclear bombs, so the devastation of nuclear power plants would considerably increase the area, which would remain unsafe for human habitation after the war. For breeder reactors, reprocessing facilities, and near-ground radioactive waste-disposal sites, the picture is even grimmer: certain portions of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the eastern half of the continental US, the states of Washington and California, and considerable portions of Western Europe, could be contaminated for decades. Even centuries later, it might be advisable to check radioactivity levels before buying land in these regions.

The wartime vaporization of most nuclear power facilities will increase (by about one-third) average global fallout and its long-term effects. Moreover, because radioactive materials from this source are longer-lived than materials produced by nuclear bombs, their relative contribution to the global fallout will increase over time. For instance, ten years after the war, total radioactivity in global fallout would be three times higher with such vaporization than without it.

You recall, of course, that the US had taken a stance late in 2004 that a Mosque was no longer exempt from attack if American troops were taking fire from one. The Iraqi insurgents didn't believe that the US would dare strike a Mosque and tested the US position. The result, in the first case, was a heavily damaged Mosque and, in the second case, a totally destroyed Mosque. A few weeks later, a group headed for México carrying some very unusual luggage. This was months before Bush announced the withdrawal of American forces. Later with the troops home and the equipment on the way, DHS lowered the threat level because no one had tried to sneak in during the confusion.

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“What are you guys doing for Christmas this year?” Gary asked Ron.

“Linda’s Dad’s hanging on like he’s afraid to die so were going to Laguna,” Ron replied. “What are you doing?”

“I don’t know if we’re doing turkey or prime rib, Ron,” Gary responded. “We’re staying close to home. I have an uneasy feeling and Christmas and Easter are the highest Christian holy days. If terrorist were going to strike and really make a statement, either of those two dates would be perfect.”

“We’re all prepared and now nothing has happened,” Ron observed. “I’m beginning to think that we all over reacted.”

“Did you think that when you were sitting in my shelter 2 years ago?” Gary inquired.

“No, of course not, but times have changed,” Ron pointed out. “Bush gave up on the war on terror and declared the war won. There would be no point to terrorists attacking the US anymore.”

“But you have been keeping everything up to date, right?” Gary asked.

“I could be wrong, too,” Ron admitted. “Yes, Gar-Bear everything is fully stocked and current. I’m spending more money on renting that darned propane tank than I am on propane.”

“You talked to Clarence lately?” Gary asked.

“Haven’t seen or heard from him in over a month,” Ron said. “We were doing real good there for a while getting to meetings and stopping by Sandy’s. Then he caught that cold and we stopped going.”

“I wondered why we stopped all of a sudden,” Gary said. “I figured you were busy getting ready for Christmas so I didn’t say anything.”

“We’ll get started back up after the first of the year,” Ron proposed.

“I’m going to call Clarence and check up on him,” Gary suggested. “When will you guys be back from Laguna?”

“Christmas is on Monday this year so probably about Wednesday,” Ron replied. “I’ve got to go, Gar-Bear. Ciao.”

“Clarence how are you doing?” Gary asked. “You get over the cold?”

“Hi Gary,” Clarence replied. “Can’t seem to shake it. I tried vitamin C and about everything I can think of.”

“Ron and Linda are going to Laguna for Christmas and I thought I call and see how you and Lucy were doing,” Gary said. “Ron said we’d get started going to meetings again after the first of the year.”

“I’d like that, assuming I can shake this darn cold,” Clarence responded warmly.

“You keeping your shelter and supplies up?” Gary asked.

“Yeah, but I don’t know why,” Clarence observed. “Operation Iraqi Freedom is over and all of the troops are home.”

“I have an uneasy feeling Clarence,” Gary explained. “Can’t really put my finger on it but it isn’t over until it’s over. Just because we left Iraq doesn’t mean that those terrorists are going to leave the country alone.”

“What are they going to do, attack on Christmas?” Clarence half chuckled.

“Why not? That would really be making a statement,” Gary asserted.

“Well if they do,” Clarence replied, “We have bomb shelters.”

“I was out on the net the other day,” Gary continued. “There are about 27 nuclear fuel rod storage places around the country. When they store those rods, they have to keep them separated to prevent them going critical. What do you suppose would happen if some terrorist exploded a suitcase nuke at one of those storage facilities?”

“But they’re guarded,” Clarence replied.

The Unprepared – Chapter 7 – Fact vs. Fiction?

Fact: If you were exposed to the radiation from a dirty bomb, it was unlikely you'd be exposed to radioactive iodine.

Fact: If you were more than 10-miles away from a nuclear reactor, like 3-Mile Island, you probably wouldn't be exposed to radioactive iodine.

Fact: Some people are allergic to KI and KIO₃.

Fact: If you are exposed to radioactive iodine, you need to take the pills before the exposure. And, you need to continue them as long as there is any radiation around.

Fact: Fuel Rod Storage sites: ARKANSAS-Arkansas Nuclear; ARIZONA-Palo Verde; CALIFORNIA-Rancho Seco; COLORADO-Fort St. Vrain; GEORGIA-Hatch; IDAHO-DOE: TMI-2 Fuel Debris; ILLINOIS-GE Morris and Dresden; MAINE-Maine Yankee; MARYLAND-Calvert Cliffs; MASSACHUSETTS-Yankee Rowe; MICHIGAN-Palisades and Big Rock Point; MINNESOTA-Prairie Island; NEW JERSEY-Oyster Creek; NEW YORK-Fitzpatrick; NORTH CAROLINA-McGuire; OHIO-Davis-Besse; OREGON-Trojan; PENNSYLVANIA-Susquehanna and Peach Bottom; SOUTH CAROLINA-Oconee and H.B. Robinson; VIRGINIA-Surry and North Anna; WASHINGTON-Columbia Generating Station; and, WISCONSIN-Point Beach.

Don't be discouraged, there were only about 45-50,000 tons of spent fuel rods stored in those locations and the terrorists only had 10 suitcase nukes. You could eliminate most active power plants from the terrorist's list of possible places to strike too, because security was too tight. So, eliminate Arkansas Nuclear, Palo Verde, Hatch, Dresden, Calvert Cliffs, Palisades, Prairie Island, Oyster Creek, Fitzpatrick, McGuire, Davis-Besse, Susquehanna, Peach Bottom, Oconee, H.B. Robinson, Surry, North Anna, Columbia Generating Station and Point Beach.

This left Diablo Canyon, Ranch Seco, Ft. St. Vrain, DOE: TMI-2 Fuel Debris, GE Morris, Maine Yankee, Yankee Rowe, Big Rock Point and Trojan. Gee, the only problem the terrorists had was deciding what to do with the extra nuke. PG&E had lost 3 sections of fuel rod in the pond at the Humboldt Bay reactor and were still looking. The reactor was scheduled to be dismantled in 2008. That made 10.

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Fact: According to a report in the Arabic newspaper al-Hayat, Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda terrorist network bought tactical nuclear weapons from Ukraine in 1998. The report says the terrorists still have the "suitcase nuke" weapons and are storing them in safe places for possible use.

Fact: In addition to the suitcase nukes, Williams reports that al Qaeda has also obtained chemical weapons from North Korea and Iraq. Williams says the FBI confirmed to him

that Saddam Hussein provided bin Laden with a “gift” of anthrax spores. Williams says al Qaeda also includes in its arsenal plague viruses, including Ebola and salmonella, from the former Soviet Union and Iraq, samples of botulism biotoxin from the Czech Republic, and Sarin from Iraq and North Korea. According to the al-Hayat report, Al Qaeda would use the weapons only inside the United States or if the group faced a “crushing blow,” which threatened its existence, such as the use of nuclear or chemical weapons against its fighters.

Fact: A military intelligence source told WorldNetDaily: “First, the terrorist in general will only want to strike the softer targets – whenever we let our guard down. Any big game is a ripe target for a terrorist attack via any means – suicide attackers with automatic weapons or a bio weapon. Although I think they are less concerned with significant dates than they are with effect.”

It wasn't that difficult for the terrorists to attack those 10 sites; one or two guys to haul the nuke and 4-6 more to take out the guards. California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan and Oregon didn't experience any secondary explosions; it would have been better if they had. Tons and tons and tons of spent fuel rods were vaporized and added to the radioactivity. It all happened around noon on Christmas Day 2006.

“Gah-ree, are you watching TV?” Clarence asked breathlessly over the phone.

“Nope, what's up partner?” Gary asked.

“Jeez, a nuke went off at Diablo Canyon,” Clarence announced. “You'd better head for your shelter.”

“It will take a little while for the radiation to get here, partner, let me check the TV and then we'll go,” Gary replied.

“You know where Lucy and I will be,” Clarence said. “We would have to have a house full of company too. Oh well, as Ron always says.”

“David, get that spool of cable I have in the garage,” Gary directed. “Someone put on the TV. I'm going to run a cable for TV from the outlet in my bedroom to the shelter.”

“What's going on?” Sharon asked.

“Clarence said that a nuke just went off at Diablo Canyon,” Gary replied.

“Lorrie, you and Amy get the food down to the shelter,” Sharon said. “I didn't slave over a hot stove all morning to have the food go to waste. Someone gather up Jeffrey, Audrey and Junior and get them to the shelter. Don't forget their dolls and teddy bears and their DVD's.”

Junior had a thing for Spiderman and Batman and it hadn't diminished even though he'd seen the movies 1,000 times. Josh grabbed a DVD player and Junior's DVD's and headed to the shelter. One of the other boys went to the garage and got the boxes containing all of the VHS movies and took them to the shelter. Another of the boys got the kids and took them to the shelter. The last boy got a VHS player and took it to the shelter. Meanwhile, Gary was trying to watch the news on CNN. Just as they were about to announce the other targets that had been hit, David and Josh disconnected the TV and hauled it to the shelter.

Chris and Patti had gone to Patti's mother's for Christmas, so Gary wasn't sure whether they'd get back to Palmdale or not, but he assumed they'd just head south for the moment. Dick showed up and asked if he'd heard the news and Gary told Dick that just about the time CNN was telling the whole story they'd yanked his TV. On the way to the shelter, Dick related as many of the blast sites as he could remember. Dick helped Gary pull the TV cable through the cable pipe using a wire snake. Gary shut off the furnace and connected one end of the cable to the outlet in the master bedroom. It was a little tough getting some of the cats out from under beds, but eventually, they had all of the pets in the shelter. Gary thought about Ron's pets but he didn't have a key to their house and Tango, the German Sheppard, would eat him alive if he tried to go in the house.

Chris and Patti were less than halfway to her mother's when they heard the news on the car radio. Chris turned the car around and headed back to Palmdale. Ron and Linda heard the news down in Laguna and the 5 of them piled in the car, leaving Linda's sister to deal with her dad. Ron wasn't normally a speed demon, but on 12/25/06, he got to Palmdale in record time. They got their pets and made it to the shelter well ahead of the radiation. Patti got their cats and the four of them headed to Gary's shelter. It wasn't locked down yet and Josh was sitting there with the CD V-700 waiting for the radiation to rise. Once Chris and Patti were in, Gary told Josh to shut it up. They had the CD V-717 and the AMP-200 that they could monitor the radiation level with. The lowest range on the CD V-717 was 500mR/hr and the lowest range on CD V-700 was 0.5mR/hr.

Remember that storage space under the new patio? It only had 7" of concrete. It served mainly to keep radiation off the food stores. That didn't mean that there wasn't any radiation, but Gary had put in two doors in the tunnel and any radiation that seeped through the concrete couldn't hurt the contents. For every 6" of concrete initial radiation is reduced by a half; and fallout radiation is reduced by a half for every 2.2" of concrete. The Swiss recommend 32" thick walls for above ground shelters. Earth is a less dense material but can replace part of the concrete in the proportions 3 to 2 (6" of earth is equivalent to 4" of concrete for example).

Gary had a Hagar radiation suit (kit) and one Millennium Gas Mask from Safer America. If they ran out of food in the shelter, he or someone else could suit up and retrieve additional food. But, before the radiation could rise, they carried a considerable amount of food into the shelter from the patio storeroom. He got Clarence on the phone and they

were fine other than being a little crowded. Clarence told Gary if the phones went down to call him on USB on channel 23.

They set up a TV for the kids in the other half of the shelter and got the TV going in their half. CNN was now able to list all 10 sites that had experienced nuclear explosions. Gary had identified 8 of the 10 sites and wasn't particularly surprised. What concerned him was how long the fallout might last. By that, he wondered how long it would take the radiation to decay. Some of those fuel rods contained elements with radioactive half-life's of thousands of years. About that time the phone rang and it was Ronald wanting to know if they were safe.

"What the hell did you come back to Palmdale for you dope?" Gary asked.

"Couldn't abandon the pets' partner," Ron replied.

"I thought about them, but didn't have a key," Gary said. "Besides, Tango would have had me for lunch."

"Who all do you have in your shelter?" Ron asked.

"Chris and Patti, Dick, David and Lorrie and family and Amy and her kids," Gary replied. "We're one bed short, but Audrey and Junior or Junior and Jeffrey can sleep in one bed."

"You shouldn't have taken those 4 bunks out," Ron said.

"It's ok partner, we're covered and it did free up 36 square foot of floor space," Gary commented. "That space is stacked full now with food. I don't know when we're going to be able to come out of the shelter, just yet."

"What do you mean?" Ron asked. "I thought that you used the seven-ten rule and could come out when the radiation level was below zero point one Rad."

"You can Ron, but when will that be?" Gary said. "Those danged terrorists vaporized those fuel rods stored at Diablo Canyon. We're still under 500R/hr, but I expect to have to switch to my AMP-200 at any time."

o

And, switch they did a short time later. The radiation level reached 2,000R/hr at 7 hours, the highest level. At 14 hours it was down to 200R/hr and at 56 hours 20R/hr. By 350 hours, it was down to 2R/hr. That was slightly over 2 weeks. At 2,401 hours, 100 days, 14¼ weeks, a little over 3 months, the radiation level was down to 200mR/hr. By this time, radio traffic between the 3 shelters was hot and heavy. Gary kept explaining that they were only allowed 300 Rads over a period of 4 months and they could go out now, but they had to wear dosimeters and log all of their exposure. They had been forced to

use city water already, but water can't become radioactive in and of itself. Since each shelter had a filter on their water and Palmdale hadn't received any physical damage, they ran that risk.

That was really something, the radiation level getting that high; it must have had something to do with the fact that all of those fuel rods at Diablo Canyon had been vaporized. Now, if you follow the seven-ten rule you'll realize how long it would be until the radiation level was down to 20mR/hr, $2,401 \times 7 = 16,807$ hours, 700 days, 100 weeks, about 2 years. At least they could be out in the stuff long enough to move out of Palmdale, but that presented a problem, in and of itself. Supposedly, according to Derek anyway, the military MOPPED up at 30mR/hr and normal background radiation was about 10mR/hr. (Derek was wrong, as you'll soon see. It is $11.4 \mu\text{R/hr}$.) However, it may help you to know that the average outdoor background level of breathable radiation in the United States, from all sources, is approximately 0.4 picocuries of radiation per liter of air.

Expressed another way, the average annual radiation dose rate was 360mR. That included Radon and if you weren't exposed to Radon it totaled only 100mRads per year. There are 365.25 days per year times 24 hours per day meaning that the background radiation level was $0.1 \text{ Rad} \div 8766 \text{ hours}$ or $11.4 \mu\text{Rads per hour}$. $11.4 \mu\text{Rads}$ equals 0.0114 mRads . In 2 years, the radiation level would be down to 20mR/hr or 1,754 times higher than the normal background radiation level. And if you assumed 360mRads because of Radon, just multiply by 3.6 and get $41 \mu\text{R/hr}$. That is much better; now the radiation level is only 488 times the normal background radiation level. Just love that Radon!!!

Forgive my diversion; what it boiled down to was that at 20mRad per hour, in 120 days you accumulated $0.020 \text{ Rads} \times 24 \text{ hours} \times 120 \text{ days} = 57.6 \text{ Rads}$, a 'perfectly safe' level. Of course your risk for cancer went through the roof, but you can't live forever, now can you? Only Irene Cara is going to live forever. (*Fame*) That was the good news. The bad news was that there were very few places you could go in the US to escape the long-term radiation resulting from the fallout from those 10 fuel rod storage places. Nobody ever said these terrorists were dumb, right? And, just think, you'd be down to 20mRads in just 2 years.

o

Remember what I told you to remember about Diego Garcia? All about those 6 airplanes stored there in those B-2 shelters? They weren't B-52's and each one could haul 16 each B61 or B83 bombs and 6 times 16 is 96 of those puppies. The B83 could be cranked up to 1.2 MT, too. So, you're the President who fought and won the War on Terror and then some ragheads come along and make a fool out of you and they spread long-term radioactive fallout over much of your country; what are you going to do? Maybe make sure it never happens again? You should have done that in the first place, George, those people all hate us anyway. If you're lucky George, you can probably even get the Israelis to fly air cover if you want.

Heck, if those Arabs want to destroy our country, let's really give them a reason. How many major cities are there in the Middle East? Are you going to exclude our allies or include them because if we blow up Iraq and Iran and Syria and Saudi Arabia will we have any allies left? Well, exclude the allies and if they make a fuss, you can load up those 6 B-2's a second time and eliminate all of the complaints. Besides, you're probably going to have to make a second run anyway to get Libya, aren't you? The French will make a fuss, but they're always bitching about something anyway. And Germany keeps losing wars so perhaps a word in the right ear will work wonders.

Say, if the earth rotates to the East, how come the prevailing winds are from the west? Doesn't matter anyway, those winds are going to have to carry that fallout $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way around the world. So the only decision you really have to make is whether you're going to start bombing in the north and work your way south or start in the south and work your way north. Start in the north and the bombers will be headed home from the moment they drop their very first bomb. Leave just after dark and bomb at night. That way the bombers can be back in their hangars before sunup and you can deny the whole thing and blame it on someone else. Come to think of it, you'd better bomb those allies too or someone might figure out that the only countries you bombed were enemies of the US. Heck, with a range of 6,000 miles, why not send one of the 6 to Libya and get Egypt on the way back? If all the Arab countries get hit on the same night, they'll probably blame it on the Israelis. And, if the Israelis complain, you can buy them off by giving them a bunch of the F-15's you were planning on retiring anyway.

Authors Note: Gary had it wrong, again. He hadn't made his calculations by raising 7 to a fractional power. Had he done that, he would have realized that at ~180 days, the radiation would be down to 100mR/hr.

The Unprepared – Chapter 8 – What Do You Mean 2 Years?

“Ronald, I’m telling you that with a background level of 200 milliRads, you will accumulate 4.8 Rads per day,” Gary tried to explain over the radio. “The limit is 300 Rads in 120 days. 4.8 times 120 is 576 Rads in 4 months, about twice the limit.”

“How long can we be outside?” Ron asked.

“300 divided by 120 is 2.5 Rads per day, partner,” Gary responded. “That’s about 12.5 hours per day, but I’d keep it to 10 or less.”

“Are you sure about the 2 years? Ron asked.

“You’ve got a CD V-700, take a reading,” Gary replied. “I gave you that chart I got from RadMeters4U. As it is, you’re going to be risking cancer.”

“Already had cancer and beat it, so I’m living on borrowed time anyway,” Ron said. “But I guess being out 10 hours a day beats not getting out at all. Thing is Gar-Bear, we only have food for about a year down here.”

“You can pack up and move,” Gary suggested.

“Like hell I can,” Ron replied. “In the first place, half the country has some amount of radiation and in the second place, we can’t just pick up and leave everything.”

“As far as food goes, you can drive down south,” Gary suggested. “Go visit your father-in-law for a few days and pick up food on the way back. One of us can keep an eye on your place and you can leave one of the kids to take care of the dogs and cats.”

“Maybe, but I’ll have to talk to Linda about that Gar-Bear,” Ron said, “Her sister is still plenty angry that we came up here and got stuck. It left her to take care of their Dad.”

“You heard anything about radiation down that way?” Gary asked.

“Nope, but I’ll take the CD V-700 and the 715,” Ron replied. “Anything I can bring you back?”

“Kool 100’s in the box,” Gary said. “Make it about 10 cartons. I’ll go see if I can find an ATM working anywhere.”

o

Gary had been out of the shelter but only for a few minutes at a time, just long enough to check on the house and other things. Chris had been going out for up to 10 hours a day, he still had a job in Hollywood. The simple truth was that there weren’t a lot of places you could go in California to escape the radiation. There weren’t a lot of places

you could go anywhere in the country that the background radiation level wasn't 10 times normal. Gary finally found a working ATM and pulled out \$300. When Ron showed up, he gave him the money and suggested Ron find a Costco (cheapest) or Sam's Club (next cheapest) to buy the smokes. He told Ron he'd go out every day for a week and load up on some cash.

When according to the exposure log they kept, Chris was approaching 75 Rads exposure Gary suggested that Chris either take a few days off or plan on staying somewhere in LA during the week. The background level was down below 20mR/hr in LA. Since they had city water, Gary suited up and masked up and washed down the patio. The radiation level immediately dropped in the storage basement, which was starting to empty out some.

"Here you go partner, 10 cartons of Kool 100's. Sorry, I could only get the soft pack," Ron said.

"What do I owe you?" Gary asked.

"You have a little change," Ron replied.

"Keep it to pay for gas," Gary said. "Where did you end up shopping?"

"A camping store that carried the Mountain House products," Ron explained. "Why?"

"We're starting to run a little low on some food items Ronald," Gary said. "I washed down the patio and the outside of the house so the radiation level is down a little. I think we'll try and spend about 10 hours a day above ground and the other 14 in the shelter. We can't afford that Mountain House stuff, so I've got to find a Costco and a Sam's Club. Dick and Chris are back at work and Chris is going to spend the weeknights down below."

o

In the event of an 'all-out nuclear war', it is estimated that the enemy would probably target all of the nuclear reactors in the other side's country. The situation in the US in 2007 was just about what one would expect had an enemy attacked the country. Which for a while seemed like a possibility. The other major nuclear powers couldn't prove the US bombed the Middle East because they had no radar records nor satellite photos to prove the Americans had done it. But, they all knew that they hadn't and the US and Russia were the 2 largest nuclear powers.

In an end run to prove the American guilt, the Russian proposed a new round of disarmament talks. Bush claimed that the American dismantlement program had been ongoing and refused to participate. Well, the US was down on the B83 bombs; we had 96 fewer of those. However, to compensate, all of nuclear warheads for the cruise missiles had been quickly upgraded and returned to service. And those old BCM-109's, Ground

Launched Cruise Missiles, were upgraded and returned to service. Very, very quietly the US was being returned to a war footing. All of those tactical nuclear weapons that we didn't have were being brought out of storage, upgraded, and returned to service. For those who can think back a few short years and remember the mindset that developed among many in the country after 9/11, multiple that by a factor of 10.

Try as they might, the environmentalists and liberals couldn't stick the administration for the blame for the condition of the country. They tried anyway, citing the huge stockpiles of spent fuel rods sitting around the country. The problem with these environmentalists was that they want to have their cake and to eat it. They didn't like the fuel rods stored all over the country, but they opposed Yucca Mountain and transportation of the fuel rods to the proposed storage place. Bush came out with a scathing attack against everyone opposed to Yucca Mountain and ordered the project to be completed ahead of schedule. The US Army would be used to transport the spent fuel rods to Nevada. There was considerable less fuel to store anyway.

The US derives 20% of its power from nuclear reactors, while in France they derived 80% of their power from the same sources. China was on a big buildup intending to build 20 additional reactors for electricity and many of them were well along in construction. Some environmentalist was suggesting smaller, more efficient reactors and many others were talking about wind turbines and solar power and alternate fuels. Arnold wanted hydrogen fueled cars, but to do that would require, according to some estimates, as many as 250 new reactors to supply the electricity to process the hydrogen. That's ok; we'll just build 1,000 of the new smaller, more efficient reactors, right?

o

There was a day in this country when you could take your rifle or shotgun and go hunting for meat. Now you needed a permit to own a gun in some places, a hunting license and you could only hunt at certain times of the year. Everybody was trying to count every type of critter and if they didn't count enough of them, the critter became an endangered species. Which was kind of silly because who cares about some owls or lizards they've never heard of and have never seen and wouldn't hunt anyway.

Some states, Iowa comes to mind, had conservation programs that were so efficient at preserving wildlife that they had to bring in hunters to cull the herd which threatened to outstrip the available food. And, if those spotted northern owls were so dang picky about which tree they sat in why was that our problem? There was one threatened species that hadn't made the list and belonged to the top. Homo Sapiens. Think about it, millions were starving all over the world; hundreds of thousands of Americans faced possible cancer due to exposure to radiation. Nature was fickle and rained when it wanted and didn't when it didn't.

George had adjusted the population of the world slightly, but that would probably turn around and bite him on the behind, all the Muslims in the world didn't live in the Middle East. The good news was that some of them were starving to death in Africa and

couldn't care less. The bad news was that the Indonesians, for example, weren't starving at all. With no evidence to back their assertions, the UN was strongly condemning the US for its unilateral action. Bush told the UN that there was no proof that the US did any such thing and asked who could blame us if we had. When the UN countered with the deaths in the Middle East being an accomplished fact while the deaths in the US were speculative, Bush countered with the statement that it was only a question of when, not if.

But it gets better. Bush went on to say that the world hadn't much cared about America except as a market for its goods and to protect them from the other guy. Any country that attacked the US would face a (nuclear) nightmare. It wasn't an empty threat according to the Russians who claimed that they had evidence of a buildup of American nuclear forces. Which claim Bush just ignored rather than responding to. In the UN, the Russian ambassador called the US ambassador to task and asked if he denied the US was engaged in a nuclear buildup. The American ambassador answered with a shrug of his shoulder and said, "Anything is possible, but to my knowledge there is no nuclear buildup." (Thanks for keeping me out of the loop, George.)

o

"According to the TV we wiped out the Middle East," Clarence told Gary.

"Good, did we kill all of them?" Gary asked.

"I don't know, but we supposedly bombed Yemen, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iran, Egypt and Libya," Clarence replied.

"It sounds to me like whoever did it stopped short," Gary responded. "They forgot Turkey, Tunisia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia."

"France, Russia and German are raising hell in the UN," Clarence commented.

"Yeah, I saw that on CNN, partner," Gary observed, "But if we used stealth bombers, I don't see how they can prove it. I seem to recall Bush saying something about the US continuing to dismantle nuclear weapons."

"The Russian ambassador asked the US ambassador to deny the US was engaged in a buildup of its nuclear forces."

"I'll bet the US ambassador denied it and said he had no knowledge of any buildup, right?" Gary asked.

"Right, did you see that on TV?" Clarence asked.

“No, Clarence, but I saw the movie ‘Clear and Present Danger’ several times,” Gary chuckled.

“Does the US really have a paper encased bomb?” Clarence asked back.

“I don’t know Clarence,” Gary said, “I called Jane’s after the movie came out, but the salesman told me the subscription to that service that was in the movie cost \$160,000 a year. I checked the net and the closest I could come up with was some carbon composite bombs that they were studying to reduce collateral damage. I later learned that Clancy admitted he’d made the bomb up. He said the government had tried to develop one but dropped the project due to stability problems.”

◦

Subject: Re: Cellulose encased bomb

Date: 1996/02/24

Clancy remarks on the Hush-A-Bomb:

I made that one up.

I learned later that stealthy bombs were looked at, but the problem was combining stealth and ballistic stability. The problem was never solved, and the project was cancelled.

In fact, the Hush-A-Bomb was a very elaborate technical joke aimed at people in the Stealth community. The weapon would certainly have worked as employed IN CPD, but would have little military utility.

TC

◦

How does one describe what was going on? I suppose one could say that there was ‘some minor consternation’ over the President’s avowed attitude. Minor hell, Congress was in an uproar. The President might be the Commander-in-Chief, but if the charges were true, where in the hell did he get off bombing the Middle East. The song says, “From the Halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli...” The President was merely carrying out foreign policy established 200 years earlier.

Following the war with the Barbary Pirates in 1805, when Lieutenant P.N. O’Bannon and his small force of Marines participated in the capture of Derne and hoisted the American flag for the first time over a fortress of the Old World, the Colors of the Corps was inscribed with the words: “To the Shores of Tripoli.” After the Marines had participated in the capture and occupation of México City and the Castle of Chapultepec, oth-

erwise known as the “Halls of Montezuma,” the words on the Colors were changed to read: “From the Shores of Tripoli to the Halls of Montezuma.”

Copyright ownership of the Marines’ Hymn was vested in the United States Marine Corps per certificate of registration dated August 19, 1891 but is now in the public domain. In 1929, the Commandant of the Marine Corps authorized the following verses of the Marines’ Hymn as the official version:

“From the Halls of Montezuma
To the Shores of Tripoli;
We fight our country’s battles
On the land as on the sea;
First to fight for right and freedom
And to keep our honor clean;
We are proud to claim the title
of United States Marine.”

On November 21, 1942, the Commandant of the Marine Corps approved a change in the words of the fourth line, first verse, to read, “In air, on land, and sea.” I’ll bet some of you saw ‘The Wind and the Lion’ and thought Teddy Roosevelt was responsible for that Tripoli line, right? The movie was an almost true story. It actually happened except that the person kidnapped was a man and there were no children involved. The story was based on a historical incident involving the kidnapping of Ion Perdicaris, an American expatriate living in Tangier. But the foreign policy that came about when the US dealt with the Barbary Pirates starting in 1801.

Viewed from that perspective Bush’s actions could be seen as ‘perfectly reasonable’ to informed historians. But, most ‘informed historians’ were liberals so when they were brought on to TV to comment on Bush’s alleged action, all they did was hem and haw. It didn’t take the media too long to drop the term alleged, either. Convicted in the court of public (media) opinion without even the benefit of a trial, Bush threatened to resign and let Cheney succeed him. That shut everyone up. They do seal Presidential Papers, don’t they?

o

Under the 1978 Presidential Records Act, virtually all of a former President’s records are to be made publicly available by the Archivist twelve years after that President leaves office. There are narrow exceptions for papers that still must be withheld for national security reasons.

But the 1978 statute specifically states that among the material to be released by the Archives twelve years after a President leaves office are his confidential and private communications with his advisers (White House staff and Cabinet Departments). The existing law does not provide an exception for withholding “attorney-client” or “attorney work product” materials.

Through Executive Order 13233 (signed 11/1/01), President Bush sought to re-interpret the 1978 law. To put it briefly, the Order adds and enumerates privileges upon which a former or incumbent President can block release of a former President's materials.

In claiming that the Order does not contradict the Records Act, Bush relied on a clause in the Act that states that it does not "confirm, limit, or expand constitutionally-based privileges which may be available to an incumbent or former President."

Good move George; did you know in 2001 that you were going to nuke the Middle East? Oh, that's right, allegedly nuke the Middle East, I'm not a journalist. I write horror novels, right? The point is that by bombing the Middle East Bush just followed American Foreign Policy established by none other than Thomas Jefferson. The unwashed of Europe would do well to remember that. Wouldn't it have been easier to invent soap than perfume?

o

Back in Palmdale the radiation level was dropping almost imperceptively. No one was interested in buying any of the homes so The Three Amigos were stuck. The city had become, in many respects, a ghost town. Some people got contractors to come in and put in underground shelters, but that was very expensive. The contractor had to scrape off a layer of contaminated soil and dispose of it in a government approved landfill. Then, the contractor's employees dug the hole, laid the block or poured the concrete and covered the shelter, all the time wearing expensive radiation protection suits. It didn't take people long to figure out that it was cheaper just to buy a pre-made shelter. The only problem with that was the waiting list was several years long.

This was where Chris got into the act. Chris was a skilled welder and Gary showed him the Utah Shelter System Corrugated Pipe Shelter on the Internet. Chris knew where he could pick up a 50' section of 10' diameter pipe for the price of the metal. So, he had a contractor come in and excavate his front yard to a depth of 20'. Following the minimal directions on USS's web site, he welded some used 3/8" plate on to one end leaving a hole for an escape tunnel. USS recommended using 36" entrance tunnel so Chris finished off the inside of his shelter and installed everything Patti and he wanted, including a deep freezer, before closing up the second end. Then, he brought in a few loads of rock and filled the hole up to the centerline of the pipe. After that it was shovel work filling the hole back in.

That shelter wouldn't have taken as long as it did, but Chris and Matt only worked at it 8 hours a day. He and Matt did everything they could themselves and when he needed help he got it from plumbers and electricians and other friends. Chris knew one of everybody. Did I mention that he had the time because he'd lost his job? They gave him 2 weeks' notice and his first stop was the Credit Union where he took out a really large loan. Anyway, with their shelter done, Patti and Sharon made a trip down below and they loaded up on food for the new shelter. Chris and Patti, Matt and Daniel plus Dick

moved to Chris's new shelter. The shelter was right there in the front lawn (no backyard, huge front yard) and wouldn't be noticeable once the dirt finished settling.

Long story short, Chris and Matt and some of those friends went into the shelter business. Chris's shelter cost about \$9,000 in materials plus the excavating. Price the same shelter at USS. USS got \$37,850 plus shipping and installation. That included a few things that Chris's shelter didn't, but the people could buy those things from USS.

What you got for \$18,000 was the 10'x50' shelter wired with a fuse panel, lights and outlets plus a toilet mounted on a tank which was connected to a sewage pump. Everything else was extra and you could either hire your own excavation contractor or Chris would hire the same guy he used and mark up the costs 10%. The price did include hooking you up to electricity, water and sewer and filling in the hole, but that was it. Even Chris had a waiting list by the time he had completed 3 shelters. You could get any size shelter you wanted from Chris, but he only had one price, \$18,000. For some reason people just seemed to gravitate towards the 50'x10' tube.

The Unprepared – Chapter 9 – My, That Was Quick

The goal, of course was to limit their 4-month exposure level to 300 Rads.

Roëntgen: The roëntgen measures the energy produced by gamma radiation in a cubic centimeter of air. It is usually abbreviated with the capital letter “R”. A milliroëntgen, or “mR”, is equal to one one-thousandth of a roentgen. An exposure of 50 roëntgens would be written “50R”.

Rad: Or, Radiation Absorbed Dose recognizes that different materials that receive the same exposure may not absorb the same amount of energy. A rad measures the amount of radiation energy transferred to some mass of material, typically humans. One roëntgen of gamma radiation exposure results in about one rad of absorbed dose.

Rem: Or, Roëntgen Equivalent Man is a unit that relates the dose of any radiation to the biological effect of that dose. To relate the absorbed dose of specific types of radiation to their biological effect, a “quality factor” must be multiplied by the dose in rad, which then shows the dose in rems. For gamma rays and beta particles, 1 rad of exposure results in 1 rem of dose.

When the background radiation level fell below 104mR/hr, they were able to leave the shelters on a permanent basis. This came after six months. At 104 mRad per hour, they were absorbing 300Rads in 120 days. However, over those 120 days the radiation level continued to fall and they never hit 300 Rads. By this time, Chris had a big business going selling those shelters. And people were starting to return to Palmdale and the affected communities. Their property was intact and except for refrigerators that stank to high heaven, there was nothing wrong with their homes.

“You folks want to plan on coming over on Saturday?” Gary asked Ron. “We’re going to have our first barbeque to celebrate moving out of the shelter permanently.

“You gonna have steak?” Ron asked.

“Name your poison partner and I’ve have it for you,” Gary responded.

“Just let Sharon pick out the steaks, partner, I’m sure they’ll be too big to eat,” Ron laughed.

“Did you get your shelter restocked for the next event?” Gary asked.

“What next event?” Ron asked tension in his voice.

“Hell I don’t know Ronald, but I figure it’s kind of like people dying. That always happens in three’s,” Gary said mirthlessly.

"We're ok then, there was the earthquake and the Diablo Canyon meltdown and then the terrorists," Ron replied.

"The meltdown was an extension of the earthquake, so we have one more to go," Gary countered.

"The Democrats will get the White House this coming November so we shouldn't have anything to worry about," Ron suggested.

Did I fail to give you a time check? Sorry, it was June of 2008. Let me bring you up to speed. George had continued the buildup of the US nuclear forces in total disregard of all of the treaties. Records showed weapons to be decommissioned and in storage but the records were a little short on being right. They buried the cost of upgrading the weapons so deep in the military budgets that no one noticed, not even Chuck Grassley. The B-2 bombers were now stationed at Anderson AFB in Guam (6), Diego Garcia (6) and Whiteman AFB, Missouri (8). Plans to forward base B-2's at Royal Air Force Fairford in the United Kingdom had been abandoned. The B-2s not equipped to deliver nukes were upgraded.

Russia's economy had picked up considerably in the past 4 years and China had some of those 20 new reactors on line producing plutonium for more bombs and warheads. North Korea had secretly tested a nuclear weapon under the auspices of the Chinese and China got blamed for violating the test ban treaty, like they really cared. The attack on the United States by those terrorists and the subsequent bombing of the Middle East by party or parties unknown had undone years of negotiations. It wasn't necessarily a resumption of the Cold War because Russia was trying to get along with everyone. Their balance of trade was very positive. By contrast, China had suffered greatly because of the attack on the US. They lost their market for most of their exports.

The general attitude in America was hard to read. There was anger at the terrorists for what they done to the country, but the fact that someone had ravaged the Middle East balanced those feelings to a degree. People were pleased that Bush had pulled all of our troops' home for the first time since WW II, Korea and Vietnam, but he'd started the War on Terror in the first place and a lot of people were beginning to think that maybe John Kerry had been right. Only thing was nobody could agree on what he'd been right about because he'd changed his position more times than a kid changes his or her mind in a candy store.

The United States wasn't building any more reactors; the NRC had embargoed further construction. All of the radioactive wastes had been transferred to Yucca Mountain and an Army Battalion was permanently stationed there to guard the facility. Bush had pushed for the development of solar and wind energy to replace the energy supplied by the reactors. The NRC had announced that no licenses for commercial reactors would be renewed. Several utilities in California sued but had started constructing coal and natural gas fueled power plants. Some of what was happening in the US was good, a

tariff had been imposed on imported goods and some of the closed down steel mills were being upgraded in preparation for being reopened.

Because of the radioactive fallout that had drifted to New York City, the UN had to close down their offices and move to Brussels, Belgium. Bush nationalized the facility stating that it had been built with US money anyway. Ron was right and Ron was wrong. The Democrats would get the White House but that didn't mean we were out of the woods. Gary said that things come in three's. It might be an old wives tale, but many wives tales are based on factual observations. They call it empirical evidence.

"I don't care who gets in the White House Ron, we have to stay prepared," Gary insisted.

"I don't know if I could look another Mountain House product in the eye," Ron chuckled. "They're good, but not THAT good, if you know what I mean."

"So try another brand or switch to regular food," Gary suggested. "Check out Alpine-Aire."

"It probably all tastes alike," Ron said.

"Probably," Gary agreed, "Why don't you just get some beans and rice?"

"Probably because we'd be eating it in an enclosed underground shelter?" Ron suggested. "Ok, I'll try AlpineAire this time, but if we don't like it, it's your fault."

The AlpineAire SuperPak System feeds 2 people for one year. But, it is pricey at over \$6,000 plus shipping. Fortunately, it has a shelf life of 20-30 years. The Mountain House UltimatePak II provides 2,550 calories per day compared to the AlpineAire 2,105 calories per day. The price of a 2-year supply for the Mountain House products for 2 people for 1-year is about \$6,307. But that place gave you 20% off on orders over \$700. And shipping was shipping, but that place was located in Louisiana, so that was something to consider. Another thing to consider was that they carried the same AlpineAire SuperPak System at exactly the same price and you got 20% off. 20% of \$6,037 is \$1,207. The cost per calorie of AlpineAire was \$2.29 versus \$1.98 for Mountain House. It depended on how much money you had and which you preferred. Ron got a sample pak and ended up sticking with Mountain House. It all tasted the same and he got more calories.

"Clarence, did you restock your shelter?" Gary asked at the barbeque.

"Yeah, I tasted some of that stuff Ron and Linda had and blew \$7,500 to put in a 1-year supply for 3 people," Clarence explained.

"I'd do it too, Clarence," Gary replied, "But I have to stock food for 12 people and I can't afford it. We've been buying stuff at Costco and Sam's Club and sealing it in those vacuum bags with oxygen absorbers. Besides, Sharon doesn't really care for that stuff."

"Ron tells me that you expect more trouble," Clarence said. "You still looking at the sky for an asteroid to fall?"

"Not really, but one thing has me concerned," Gary said. "According to the Russians, the US had been doing a nuclear arms buildup. It's going to take another 12 years for the background radiation to get down to 2mR/hr. That's about 175 times the normal background radiation. The way I figure it, it will be about 686 years for the background radiation to get back to 2 times normal. One more dose of radiation should just about kill the population of the US off from cancer."

"My, my," Clarence shook his head. "Maybe we'd be better off if an asteroid stuck. Considering our age, it really doesn't make much difference, does it?"

"Sure it does, I want to outlive my Dad just out of spite," Gary said.

"How long did he live?" Clarence asked.

"He was about 78½ when he died, but he had a bad heart," Gary replied. "I just want to get to 80. That would be about 2023."

"If you don't stop being so grumpy," Ron interrupted, "You'll be lucky to make it to 66. So, if you're right Gar-Bear, what is going to happen next?"

"You got me, my crystal ball is at the cleaners," Gary laughed. "Nothing good, I can assure you."

The official birthrate in China was about 13 births for 1,000 population and the death rate was about 7 deaths per 1,000 population, giving China a net growth rate of about 0.57%. The July 2004 population of China was estimated to be around 1,298,847,624. That meant that the Chinese population was growing by about 7.4 million a year and increasing. The population of China would about hit 1,328,715,510 by mid-2008. The net growth in those 4 years would be 29,867,886. What if that many people were in the People Liberation Army? The CIA Fact Book said that China had 208 million males age 15-49 that were fit for military service in 2004 and that increased by about 12 million a year.

30 million people take up a lot of space and eat a lot of food. China only had 9,326,410 km² of land and of that, only 15.4% was arable land. 1,000,000 square meters, 1 km² equals 246.914 acres. 15.4% of 9,326,410 equals 1,436,267.14 km². The arable land therefore amounted to about 354,634,464 acres. The same source says that the US has 9,161,923 square kilometers of land that is 19.13% arable. That means that the US arable land equaled 1,752,676 square kilometers or about 432,760,210 acres. Am I wrong

or is the arable land in the US about 1.22 times the amount of arable land in China? Using the same population sources as I did for China and making the same population growth projections, the US population in 2008 was 303,960,712. There was 1.42 acres of arable land for every person in the US, assuming that the radiation level wasn't too high. Conversely, China had .27 acres of arable land per person.

Need a reason for China to invade the US? Read the last paragraph. Hell, even if we were super-efficient at killing them off, their military aged citizens, male ages 15-49, would grow by 12 million a year. And how will they get here? China's maritime fleet in 2004 consisted of: barge carrier 2, bulk 355, cargo 822, chemical tanker 28, combination bulk 10, combination ore/oil 2, container 165, liquefied gas 28, multi-functional large load carrier 8, passenger 6, passenger/cargo 46, petroleum tanker 272, rail car carrier 1, refrigerated cargo 27, roll on/roll off 25, short-sea/passenger 39, specialized tanker 10, and vehicle carrier 4. That's how they would do it.

The Chinese had to consider what the American reaction might be if they invaded the US. They had to also consider if some other country might not be a better choice. They had heard the Russian claims that the US was doing a nuclear buildup, but they had been doing it themselves. Surely the US military spy satellites had shown the Americans how much they'd increased their nuclear forces. Remember, they were bringing those reactors online at a significant rate. The US would have to consider China's considerable nuclear forces before they launched a nuclear attack.

There is considerable uncertainty in published estimates of the size of the Chinese nuclear weapons stockpile. In the late 1980s it was generally held that China was the world's third-largest nuclear power, possessing a small but credible nuclear deterrent force of 225 to 300 nuclear weapons. Other estimates of the country's production capacities suggested that by the end of 1970 China had fabricated around 200 nuclear weapons, a number which could have increased to 875 by 1980. With an average annual production of 75 nuclear weapons during the 1980s, some estimates suggest that by the mid-1990s the Chinese nuclear industry had produced around 2,000 nuclear weapons for ballistic missiles, bombers, artillery projectiles and landmines. And now, China had even more reactors producing even more plutonium. Something to think about isn't it?

George W. Bush was bluffing in a big way. That was why he had let questions about a US arms buildup go unanswered. However, when the NSA advised the White House of a considerable buildup of ships in Chinese ports, George had his chest in the wringer. He decided on one last bluff, to openly admit that the US had every single nuclear weapon out of storage, upgraded and dispersed. Called an evening press conference and made the announcement to the American people. He also pledged that if the enemy didn't use nuclear weapons against the US, the US would be 'unlikely' to use nuclear weapons against the enemy.

The Chinese breathed a sigh of relief at the evening press conference and continued to load their ships. The NSA informed Bush that the Chinese were still going at it and Bush

ordered 4 carrier strike groups from the Atlantic to the Pacific, raising the number of carrier strike groups on the west coast and in Hawaii to 11 and leaving only 2 carrier task groups in the Atlantic. He also ordered all but a few of the US nuclear submarines to the Pacific. The US has 23 688I-class submarines and 26 688-class boats. There are 3 Seawolf class and 3 Virginia class. In addition to the attack boats, the US has 4 SSGN and 14 SSBN Ohio class subs.

The Chinese launched 1,366 ships carrying troops and 378 ships carrying equipment, fuel and supplies. That was a host of targets, 1,744, and too many for the subs and the carriers to handle. What, you think they didn't put shoulder-launched missiles aboard every ship? The Chinese Navy was fairly small; they only had 67 submarines, 2 carriers, 24 destroyers, 45 frigates and 90 guided missile boats. But, that didn't include the 100 minelayers, the 37 amphibious warfare ships, the 109 warfare craft, the 43 surveillance ships or the 134 support ships. It did include the 26 auxiliary merchant marine ships, however. Grand total? The total was 2,328 vessels plus 7 nuclear submarines and 60 diesel boats. Subtract 1; one of the nukes was a missile boat.

Everybody seems to think that between our Air Force and the Navy's carriers no enemy could ever invade the US. Hell, the Chinese had more submarines than we did and most of their submarines were those quiet diesel class boats. The only time you could hear them was when they surfaced or snorkeled. Putting along underwater on that electric motor didn't give off much sound. And following in the wake of the guided missile boats and frigates helped to mask their sound further. And, since the Chinese chose to intermingle their Navy with the civilian fleet, the subs were pretty well masked.

Not all of the ships got through by any means, but enough so that the US military was heavily outnumbered. George's bluff hadn't worked and the NSA flatly told him that the Chinese had a lot more missiles than anyone estimated. 1,366 times an average of 5,000 put 6.83 million infantry troops aboard ship. Of these, more than 4 million landed on the west coast. Let's see, how big is the total US military? Active duty 1,452,700, Reserve 905,700 for a total of 2,358,400. So, were we outnumbered 2 to 1? Hell no, those Chinese hadn't read the Constitution or remembered the American Revolution. They knew that many Americans were armed, but failed to take that into consideration in their planning.

Once their ships were unloaded, they were sent back to China for a second load of troops and supplies. We got 25% coming and 25% going, cutting their fleet in half. Still that meant that they could add another 2,000,000 troops to their totals, even allowing for additional ships sinking. This could go on forever as long as the percentage held. Oh, I know, you think the Chinese Army, Air Force and Navy is inferior to that of the US, right? The Department of Defense reports that 54,246 American service men and women lost their lives during the Korean War. And, that was before the Chinese had the AK-47, a thoroughly reliable firearm.

"So, does this make 3?" Ron asked.

“An invasion of the US qualifies, so I’d say so, Ronald,” Gary replied. “We can’t sit in Palmdale; we’ll be overrun in a few days.”

“Where are we going to go?” Ron asked.

“Do you remember that Underground City I wrote about in some of my stories?” Gary asked. “It’s in eastern California and was a civil defense shelter at one time. The only thing I can’t figure out is how we’re going to get all of our stuff from here to there.”

“We’ll try to buy pickups and trailers and if that doesn’t work, we’ll steal them,” Ron said. “You have that portable generator and 500-gallons of gas, right?”

“Right, but what about our standby residential generators, why can’t we move them?” Gary asked.

“If we can get enough big trucks, we can,” Ron said. “We’ll need a semi and a crane to pick up those propane tanks, they’re heavy.”

As it happened, Chris knew a couple of tractor-trailer operators who had flatbeds. Ron arranged for a crane to lift Gary’s 2 3,300-gallon propane tanks, his 500-gallon gas tank and his 15kw generator. They located some empty pallets and palletized the supplies and soon everything from all 4 shelters, including Chris and Patti’s, was aboard the 2 trailers. Having tractor-trailer rigs to haul their stuff eliminated the need to buy or steal any pickups or trailers, but people were bolting from Palmdale, sometimes leaving their pickups behind. They managed to help themselves to 4 new pickups at the GMAC dealers instead of taking something that might give up the ghost halfway to Arizona. That was stealing, but this was war. A Chevron tanker had pulled into the Chevron station at 30th St. East and Palmdale Boulevard and Ron stopped to visit with the driver. He had a full load of diesel. Had is the correct term, folks, now Gary, Ron and Clarence had 16,000-gallons of diesel fuel to add to their 14,400-gallons of propane (17,600-gallons at 90%, remember?) and their 550-gallons of gas. Pep Boys carried the 32 ounce bottles of PRI-D and PRI-G. It took 16 of the 32-ounce bottles to treat each tank-er; they held 8,000 gallons each.

In the span of a day, everything was loaded and The Three Amigos, their families and Chris and Patti were headed east. Gary commented how all that research for his fiction had paid off. They could power up that cave and stay there for as long as it took the Army, Air Force and Navy to defeat the Chinese. And, if necessary, he’d get out his walker and hunt down a few Chinese himself. He’d probably be ok, he said, as long as they got within 100-yards in the daylight.

Authors Note: You may recognize those definitions I borrowed from Shane Connor at RadMeters4U. The AlpineAire website doesn’t show the complete dimensions for storing a SuperPak System. They are 6.5’x3.25’x4’ (I read the source code for the web page.)

The Unprepared – Chapter 10 – Criminal Element

“This is fine how do you do,” Clarence observed. “We got through an earthquake, 2 radiation events and now you turn us into common criminals by hijacking a truckload of diesel and stealing 4 pickups.”

“You can take it back to Palmdale if you want Clarence,” Ron said, “But if you don’t speak Chinese, probably no one will understand you. We’ll just blame on those Chinamen.”

“What I’m worried about,” Gary interrupted, “Is the fact that all of those vehicles are plainly visible from the air. Those Chinamen must have some airplanes even if we haven’t seen any.”

“We can break up the outlines a little with brush,” Ron suggested. “How about we take a run down to Blythe and see about some sort of camouflage netting?”

“We could use some more extension cords, too,” Chris suggested. “I didn’t have all that many lights so you guys had better look for some of those cheap reflectors and incandescent bulbs.”

In Blythe, they located 2 electricians and got a couple of large spools of 12 gauge, 3 conductor extension cord wire, a breaker box, extra breakers and duplexes and boxes. Ron made a note that there was an AmeriGas dealer in town. There was an Albertson’s and a Smart and Final Iris and they bought 3 pickup loads of food. They picked up 4 toilets and 4 sewage pumps at a plumbing shop and mounts for the toilets so they could use them indoors and pump the sewage to a septic farm. The septic tanks and drain field pipes came from another plumbing shop.

They practically cleaned out the sporting goods store buying extra ammunition and items appropriate to their situation. They also hit K-Mart pretty hard, but it was a little picked over already. They also hit Sears and the other appliance store in town and picked up a couple of used refrigerators and a used electric stove. They probably could have bought more but they used all of their available cash and all they could get from an ATM. That, by the way, was the last time the ATM would be functioning for some months to come. Merchants were taking debit card transactions but not credit card transactions.

They had pulled the 2 semis together and manhandled the residential standby generators onto the trailer with the propane tanks. They had all 4 pickups filled and a pretty good load on the semi-trailer. And, they only had about \$1,000 cash left among them. The nearest Wal-Mart store turned out to be in Lake Havasu City 32 miles away. They decided not to waste the fuel; the embargo had left many Wal-Mart shelves nearly empty. Besides, they got enough netting to allow them to camouflage their vehicles. Ron didn’t agree with that decision, Wal-Mart had the lowest price on 5.56 ammo of any-

place he knew. Clarence and he set off for Lake Havasu by themselves. They each bought all that Wal-Mart would sell them and were back in 2 hours.

Of course by the time they got back the netting was up and a generator running. The other things they'd picked up at the Wal-Mart store were cots to sleep on. The selection included the twin-sized camp cot with an air mattress and the queen-sized air mattress with frame. Apparently Wal-Mart hadn't gotten the word or was counting on their Chinese contacts because they took Ron's Amex card. You have to realize that this wasn't a big crew. Gary's family was 12, Clarence's 3, Ron and Linda's 5, Chris and Patti's 4 and Dick's 1. They had enough food to last for a very long time and an electric stove to cook it on. The stove was connected to a dedicated generator and everything else to a second. They had enough building supplies to put in two bathrooms and they had a septic tank to install. There was nothing to attract attention to the Underground City except the sound of the generators and they only had sound levels of 70dB.

Chris and friends had done very well with the shelter business. So much so that he'd paid back the Credit union, finished off his shelter with all of the extras and still had lots of money in the bank. Patti had taken some of that money and bought Chris a Loaded M1A and Matt and her each a Mini-14. Derek had provided her with the high capacity magazines and Sandy sold surplus ammo. Chris wasn't too happy, he basically didn't like guns, but under the present circumstance, he was glad he had them. They couldn't do much to muffle the sound of the generators but they were far enough off the main road you couldn't hear them.

It all sounds pretty good until you realize that while they had water tanks, they didn't have a source for water. They located a well driller in Quartzsite and had him put in a well. They didn't have any cash to pay the guy, but he actually took a check drawn on Gary's Iowa account. He said his bank would send it for collection and if it bounced, he'd be back. Under the existing banking system, all checks are cleared almost instantly, electronically. They didn't see any more of the well driller.

Before you get all excited about how The Three Amigos and friends were making out over there in eastern California, I must draw your attention to a few things. Gary had been writing fiction for quite a long time and had a virtual catalog of information stored on his computer's HDD. When Gary's memory worked, it worked very well indeed and when it didn't, he barely knew his own name. The youngest of The Three Amigos, in chronological age, Gary's body was probably about the oldest, but Ron and Clarence weren't that far behind. The group included 5 men in the 20-30 year age bracket, David's 4 boys and Matt. Chris and Dick were in good condition and don't forget Amy; she could be meaner than a junkyard dog if you struck her the wrong way. I didn't include Daniel because though he was in his 20's, he was mentally about 3.

The folks had food and water, sanitation, electricity and a hiding place that was very difficult to find. Much of the Chinese armament was of soviet design so if they could knock off a patrol or two, they could add type 56 (AK-47) or type 81 or 95 rifles, type 69 grenade launchers (RPG-7) or perhaps the Chinese LAW rockets type PF-89 plus the type

82-2 or type 86 hand grenades to their armory. There were a lot more of the Chinese than there were of them so everything had to be done very carefully and always as an ambush against a smaller Chinese force like a squad or patrol. Even this would be a tremendous risk; all of their firearms were 'California legal', so far.

By this time the Chinese military, the horde as Ron called them, had advanced to the Inland Empire. Fewer people in California had illegal arms put away than any of them imagined and there wasn't a lot of Militia resistance. The military had taken a stand in the San Bernardino area however and the horde was stalled. The enemy was now well within range of the Air Force fighter/bombers and they were taking a beating. This gave The Three Amigos an opportunity to make the 4-hour drive to Phoenix looking for a class III dealer.

They found one and to their surprise: 1) he said screw the law, he'd sort that out later; 2) he had Surefire suppressors with FA adapters available, \$1,700 installed; and 3) he had Butler Creek folding stocks modified with an aluminum heat sink. The Mini-14's would need a new barrel to accept the M4-FA suppressors, also in stock. The price was \$1,900 installed. He needed 3 days to make all of the modifications and yes, he accepted American Express and checks, up front only. The Three Amigos had all of the rifles, leaving the folks back in California to fend with the handguns. They had 5 M1A's and 8 Mini-14's to be modified. With time on their hands, they scoured Phoenix buying magazines and ammo and a few other things that Arizona allowed to be sold. Gary was able to get through to Matt and learned that their forced confinement had allowed the Iowa account to grow to a healthy balance. Matt said that under the present circumstances, the investment committee had authorized him to transfer \$20,000 from the principal to Gary's checking account.

Feeling fat and flush, they returned to the class III dealer and Gary bought 6 M16A3's and had the M4-FA's installed on those too. They didn't have much trouble locating 30-round M16 magazines at a reasonable price nor scopes for the M1A's. They bought all of the food the trailer and pickup would hold and 3 days later were on their way back to California, better equipped but very much poorer. When they got to the Underground City they learned that the Chinese had pushed the American forces back to Palm Springs but that the Chinese had paid a terrible price for that 50-mile advance.

They distributed the firearms and Gary gave David and the boy's all an AR. He kept the sixth for Sharon and gave Amy a Mini-14. They spent a ½ day going over use of the rifles and the other ½ day on a hastily erected range. There wasn't any backstop, just miles and miles of desert. Amy and Sharon swapped rifles because they wanted to, I guess. All I can do is relate the events as they happened. At the time, no one was really listening to me. Oh, they thanked me for the weapons, but then did their own thing. By this time we probably had more ammo than we'd ever use so we spent a fair amount of time on the range. Admittedly we'd burned through a lot of money in Phoenix, but our M1A's were pretty decent sniping rifles by this time and all of our weapons had excellent flashhiders. We didn't figure that the CHP or any of the LEO's would have much time to mess with our now totally illegal firearms and equipment.

The Army had begun a withdrawal to the Colorado River where they could make an effective stand. This left Blythe sort of a rear area for the Chinese troops. Before they arrived, we made one last trip to Blythe and loaded up on fast food and bought a couple of freezers we could fill with meat. I managed 6 tacos and a double-double In and Out burger before I couldn't eat another bite. Some of the others hit a steak joint and ate to their hearts content. In our absence, David and his boys and Chris and Matt had dug some fighting holes to protect the Underground City. Regardless of what you called the place, it really wasn't any more than a large Civil Defense Shelter left over from a by-gone era.

We had managed to lift a SINCGARS radio from a Hummer so we could monitor the activities of the US military. I'll bet that driver was surprised to discover his antenna and radio gone. We had it in mind to be Batman and Robin, slipping in on occasion and raising hell with small groups of Chinese troops. Remember, there weren't very many of us and some of us were reasonably advanced in age. On the other hand, most of us were very pissed off and that might make some difference. I got stuck driving a pickup because I wasn't as mobile as the rest of the people. Matt had a thing for odd painting schemes and he'd done a pretty good job painting camouflage on those 'borrowed' pickups. The truth of the matter was that that old civil defense shelter wasn't on any maps and unless the Chinese were able to track us with helicopters and locate the heat signatures of our vehicles we were pretty much home free.

By this time we were little more than criminals, having 'borrowed' those pickups and brought all sorts of unregistered NFA firearms into California. But who the hell cared? If we somehow managed to survive the whole thing, we could return the pickups and settle up with the dealers. And California had no idea what we'd done with our firearms and we'd never tell. And, if we succeeded in capturing any enemy weapons, that would be our little secret. We'd dismantled my radio antennas, they were the easiest to get down, and had a pretty good communication center. We'd have probably done better but that whip antenna on the Hummer was the only thing available. Still it worked well enough that we could listen to the military broadcasts even though a lot of them didn't make much sense.

We picked up word that the Chinese had left a small detachment at the Union 76 station west of Blythe and decided to try a nighttime operation. It turned out to be a very small garrison force left to protect the fuel supplies at the station. We avoided Blythe and made it to the station. Clarence and I got stuck guarding the pickups and the rest of the fellas went sneaking in to see what they could do to the horde. We could have all crammed into one pickup but took two in case one of them got shot up or something. It took the rest of the fellas about an hour to clean out that nest of Chinamen. They'd gone through the store at the station after they were done and picked up 4 more CB radios and antennas for the pickups. They also grabbed a bunch of minor repair parts including oil, air and fuel filters plus several cases of oil for the pickups and all of the candy and snacks they could carry.

We talked it over and drove down to the station. We refilled our tanks and made another pass through the store. We added repair parts for the 2 semis and some other items, but nothing really worth mentioning. By dawn's early light, we were back at the Underground City and fairly pleased with ourselves. Chris and the guys had also moved those generators into the shelter and run exhaust pipe out to a pool they fashioned. The exhaust gasses percolated through the rocks and water and didn't give off much of a heat signature. This was good, the Chinese must have figured that they had a rogue militia outfit in the area and several passes over our area were made by helicopter but they didn't spot us.

"You guys had all the fun," Gary complained. "Clarence and I were left to guard the pickups."

"Gar-Bear it was over a ½ mile from the pickup to the station," Ron pointed out. "Are you really up to crossing a ½ mile of desert on foot?"

"Probably not, partner, but I wouldn't have minded taking a pot shot or two at that Chinese Garrison," Gary replied.

"Listen, what Clarence and you did was important," Ron went on. "If some of those Chinamen had circled us and found the pickups, we could have been on foot. Besides, it wasn't much more than a couple of squads of infantry."

"What did we get for weapons?" Gary asked.

"Some RPG's, about 2 dozen of the type 81 rifles, extra magazines, some hand grenades, 4 of their Squad Automatic weapons and a few cases of their ammo," Ron replied.

"We could use a few more people," Clarence offered.

"I imagine they all headed to Arizona ahead of the Chinese," Ron suggested.

"We could go up to Lake Havasu City and try and recruit some old veterans to help us out," Clarence suggested. "There were a bunch of them there."

"Nope," Ron countered. "According to this captured map we picked up they have forces in that area, too."

"Any indication how many?" Clarence asked.

"Well yeah, it's right there, on the map but I don't read Chinese," Ron scowled.

"Then we need to scout their positions," Gary announced. "Get Matt and one of David's boys checked out on those captured Chinese weapons and send them. That Matt is the sneakiest kid I know. Did we get any Chicom night vision equipment?"

“Yeah, a pair of binoculars,” Ron replied. “I’ll figure out how they work and send them with the kids.”

Points of reference: The Chinese used thermal imaging equipment during the Korean War. Not all that long ago 2 American businessmen were tried and convicted for selling thermal imaging cameras to the Chinese. All Chinese Paratroops are equipped with night vision equipment.

Gary explained to the boys that a squad was about a dozen men, a platoon about 4 squads and a company about 4 platoons. A battalion was about 4 companies, but if they ran into a battalion, just pack it up and come home. They could probably only dare take on one or two squads, but they needed to know what they were up against. The boys didn’t need long to get accustomed to the Chinese type 81 rifles or the night vision binoculars and they spent some time converting a section of netting to camouflage. They also came up with improvised Ghillie drapes. When they were good to go, they left just before sunset so they had just enough light to find a place to stash the pickup, if necessary.

The boys took 95 north and crossed the Colorado River at Parker Dam. They attracted a little attention in Lake Havasu City because they looked more like guerilla fighters than a couple of civilians. They quickly scouted across the river and could see what looked to be about a company of Chinese troops. These guys must be idiots, they could go north or south and cross the river, but there they sat. Matt and Josh diverted to their secondary mission, recruiting people to help them at the Underground City. Demographically, the median age in the community was 47.5 years of age and the population was about 94% white. No other racial group accounted for any notable percentage.

Matt dropped a big hint that they were looking to hook up with some veterans who might be interested in having ‘a little fun’. He also let it be known that they were from the Blythe area, temporarily, and they weren’t really looking for anyone who wasn’t spoiling for a fight. Then, Josh and he got a motel room and settled into a restaurant waiting for people to find them. Slowly, over the course of the next 3 days, they were approached by a few men, mostly veterans from ‘Nam. Matt explained in general what their situation was and invited several of the men to join them with their family, if they had one. They would be leaving about 1 hour before dusk the next day to go back to their encampment. Anyone interested should be at the motel by that time. Matt suggested that they supply their own guns and ammunition and be sure to bring something to sleep on, like a camp cot. They should also bring suitable clothing and as much food as they could carry.

Matt and Josh loaded the pickup with food and some supplies and the next evening left for ‘home’ with a caravan of about 9 pickups. They timed it just about right and arrived at the Underground City just at sunset. Everything was hurriedly unloaded and moved underground. Introductions were made all around and the ladies jointed the other ladies while the men got together to discuss ‘military affairs’. Matt told the geezers that it

looked like there was about a company of Chinese camped on the California side of the river. Neither he nor Josh had seen any artillery so it made no sense for them to be there.

“What ya think partner?” Ron asked.

“According to this map, we can take 95 north and pickup up Havasu Lake Road and come in behind them,” Gary explained. “I expect they’ll have guards out so if we’re careful, we can pick up some more equipment.”

“How well are you people equipped?” Rudy Jensen, one of the newcomers asked.

“We have 5 M1A’s, 8-Mini-14’s and 6 M16A3’s, all suppressed,” Ron recounted. “In addition we have a couple of dozen of those Chinese rifles, some RPG’s and some hand grenades.”

“Our group is all equipped with semiautomatic M14 rifles,” Rudy said. “Same thing as a M1A; we were a gun club of sorts.”

“Any other firearms?” Gary asked.

“You can’t beat the M1911 for reliability so we all have one of those,” Rudy answered. “We bought all of the wives M16’s, but some of those are A1’s and some are A2’s.”

“Ammo and magazines?” Ron asked.

“Lots,” Rudy replied.

“While the boys were gone, we erected a dozen extra sleeping enclosures,” Clarence pointed out. “You boys bring something to sleep on?”

“The boy said to bring our own beds so we hit Wally World and got some of those queen-sized air mattresses on frames,” Rudy replied.

“That’s what most of us use too,” Ron chuckled. “Let’s get some supper and resume this later.”

The Unprepared –11 – What California Doesn't Know

...*won't hurt us*, Ron replied when someone asked about the Chinese weapons.

Try that on as a philosophical question. Are you a criminal when you break a stupid law or only when you get caught? So far as the trucks went, they would resolve that issue with the dealer when they got back to Palmdale, assuming he was still alive. But, what about all of those nasty guns they had? No harm, no foul. Old Gary was considering it just another fell-o-knee, one of many.

They were resolved to avoid contact with the Chinese in any sizable numbers even though there were now The Three Amigos, David, the 4 boys, Chris, Matt, Dick and the 9 guys from Lake Havasu City, 20 in all. Amy wanted to be counted in but they told her that someone had to guard the fort. The Chinese SAW (Squad Machine Gun) was a modified type 81 rifle with a fixed stock and 75 round drum magazine. They gave her a SAW to shut her up. Patti volunteered to pull guard duty, as did some of the wives from Lake Havasu City. Sharon, Linda and Lucy passed, but I suspect in a pinch they'd grab a rifle and shoot too.

After much discussion, not all of it polite, they decided to leave the Chinese across from Lake Havasu City alone. The general feeling was that the Chinese in Blythe were more spread out and easier targets. They were also easier to avoid when you got right down to it. Up north, there was only one-way in and out, Havasu Lake Road. If someone flanked them, they could be in trouble. That wasn't totally true, but the map they had didn't show the other road. It was finally agreed to focus their attention on Blythe and only go to town when they heard something on the radio about the Chinese and our troops being engaged in combat.

With that decided, they decided to look around and see what it would take to make the place a little more livable. Those dividers they'd thrown up were just that, dividers, giving visual but no audible privacy. To solve that problem would take a load of building materials, but they were behind enemy lines so it remained unsolved. They'd been there long enough that they'd burned up Ron's tank of propane and were well into a Clarence's. They suspected that even if they had a phone, they couldn't just call up Ameri-Gas in Blythe and order a load or two. This was going to call for stealth and deception, which pretty much left the geezers out.

"What I think we should do is grab some of those Chinese and get their uniforms," Matt suggested.

"If you do that, you'd better bury the bodies deep, Matt," Ron pointed out. "It's one thing to have soldiers go missing and quite another for them to be found dead. What would you do with the uniforms?"

“From what we’ve seen, they’ve occupied some of the homes in Blythe and must refill the propane tanks,” Matt reported. “We’ll just take over the propane resupply job until we can get the tanks refilled.”

“That just might work,” Rudy chimed in. “They probably only have a few people who know how to handle propane and if that’s your source for uniforms, you can haul 3 loads and refill the tanks and hang onto the left over fuel. Bring the bodies back with you and we’ll bury them.”

“Face down?” Ron asked.

“Burying them is probably insult enough Ron,” Rudy chuckled.

Matt and David’s boys left early the next morning intent on getting propane and anything else that was lying around. They waylaid the propane truck making a delivery and found someone to fit the uniform. Thank God the truck had an automatic transmission. The truck had a full load since that soldier hadn’t begun to make his delivery so they sent the truck to the encampment to unload and return. They kept their eyes open and within an hour spotted another delivery truck just leaving the AmeriGas facility. They flagged this guy down bold as you please and were very careful not to get blood on his uniform. With 2 trucks, they’d only have to reload once and they’d have surplus propane.

Blythe had two building material suppliers located less than 2 blocks apart. They were just about downtown but they decided to risk seeing what they could find. At the one lumberyard, they found lots of drywall that had been in the process of being unloaded from a semi. Hell, they fired up a forklift and loaded the drywall back aboard the trailer and sent it off to the Underground City. At the other lumberyard, they got an assortment of nails and a 2½-ton truckload of precut studs, which they loaded and sent home. That only left Matt in Blythe and he headed towards the AmeriGas depot on the west side of town. The place was deserted when he got there so he assumed the drivers must have filled the trucks themselves.

About an hour later one of the propane trucks arrived at the depot with Ron along. Ron hooked up the fittings and refilled the tank and then remained with Matt. He told the kid driving the truck to return it when it was empty.

“We’re going to have to bring the trucks back and leave them here Matt,” Ron said. “They may or may not miss those 2 soldiers you killed, but they sure as hell would miss these trucks.”

“We sent some building materials up to the City,” Matt commented.

“Passed them on the way,” Ron replied, “What all did you take?”

“½” drywall on the semi and precut studs and nails on the second truck,” Matt explained. “You old guys give up too easy. We just walked in and helped ourselves.”

“It will be nice to have some real privacy,” Ron observed.

“Hell, at your age I didn’t know it made any difference,” Matt said.

The arrival of the second truck put an end to the discussion. While they had been visiting, Ron had been snooping around. He found another semi with 8 empty 550-gallon propane tanks sitting on it. Ron told Matt to haul those tanks home and he’d refill the delivery truck. Ron had borrowed a Mini-14. When the second delivery truck arrived back at the facility, Ron reloaded it and sent it back up north with instructions to return. It was all going so smoothly when Murphy made an appearance in the form of a Chinese Sergeant checking to see why his troops weren’t making the deliveries as instructed. A couple of rounds from the Mini-14 put an end to his curiosity, but created another problem.

Ron decided they needed to change their plans. He loaded the soldier in the back of the pickup and waited for the delivery trucks to return. So far, they had hauled 12,000-gallons of propane up north, but with the 8 550-gallon tanks they needed more fuel. And, it was very unlikely that 3 missing soldiers would go unnoticed. He told the kid driving the truck to empty it and come back for one final load. When the second delivery truck returned, they refilled it and Ron told the driver to not come back, there’d been a change of plans. The both trucks came back because Ron has miscalculated. They’d sent 18,000 gallons of propane to the Underground City, and had capacity for about 18,000-gallons including the new tanks, leaving the tanks full and the trucks empty. Matt and the boys showed up and the empty trucks filled them and headed back to the hideout.

With the propane they still had, they had enough for a full year. I say enough for a full year because with extra mouths to feed, etc. and a purloined electric water heater for the community shower, they were running 1 generator full time and a second 12 hours a day. Their consumption rate on propane was about 4.8-gallons per hour for 12 hours a day and 2.4-gallons per hour for the other 12 hours. This meant that they had about a 300-day supply of propane.

The US Air Force had been pounding the Chinese positions on the west bank of the Colorado River for quite some time. It was frankly surprising that there were many Chinese left. In fact, all along the front, the US had acquired and maintained air superiority and the Chinese were being chopped to mincemeat. One of the boys reported that a couple of hundred Chinese had come south on 95 headed for Blythe. Everyone assumed it was probably that bunch from up at the lake.

“I’ll sure be glad when we win this war,” Clarence said.

“Anxious to get home?” Ron asked.

“Yes I am,” Clarence replied. “This living in a hole in the ground has gone on for far too long.”

“I’ve been thinking about those pickups we stole, Clarence,” Ron offered, “Maybe we can just drop them off and no one will be the wiser. They should be grateful to us for saving them from the horde.”

“What about that Chevron tanker?” Gary asked.

“We can fill up our tanks and leave the tanker at the Chevron station there in Blythe,” Ron said. “We really haven’t burned that much fuel anyway.”

“I think you boys are getting ahead of yourselves,” Rudy interjected. “The war isn’t over yet.”

“Maybe not, but you have to think ahead, Rudy,” Gary said. “It’s thinking ahead that saved our butts more than once.”

“Where are you folks originally from?” Rudy asked.

“Palmdale,” Ron replied. “We had the earthquake and the Diablo Canyon accident to deal with plus when those terrorists blew up those fuel rod storage sites and we ended up underground for months.”

“And you stayed in Palmdale the entire time?” Rudy asked, surprised.

“We had shelters,” Clarence explained, “Thanks to Gar-Bear. Chris even got into the shelter building business and was doing pretty good when the Chinese came along.”

“What kind of shelters did you have?” Rudy asked.

“Got ours from American Safe Rooms in Oregon,” Gary said.

“They come with Jack Daniels?” Rudy asked.

“We don’t drink, Rudy,” Ron replied. “Anyway, Chris was copying the design that Utah Shelter Systems built. He referred all of his customers to them to buy the extra stuff they needed like blast doors, blast valves, and air purifiers. His shelters were 10’ by 50’ corrugated pipe.”

“I wonder if we should consider building shelters after this is all over?” Rudy asked.

“Gar-Bear says that these things happen in three’s,” Clarence said, “so this should be the last one.”

“How do you figure?” Rudy asked. “An earthquake, a reactor leak, a terrorist attack and now this. That makes 4. If Gary is right, we have 2 more to go.”

“He’s counting the earthquake and the reactor leak as one event,” Ron explained.

“He could be right, but, I wouldn’t,” Rudy said. “I’d be looking at the sky waiting for the asteroid to strike.”

“Bite your tongue, partner,” Ron said and didn’t smile. Neither did he explain the way the rule worked, 3, 9, 27 and 81.

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Six months later they were back in Palmdale. Once the Army, Air Force and Marines got on a roll, they kicked the crap out of the Chinese. The Navy had made an all-out effort and had moved the other carriers around the horn and submarines through the Panama Canal and they sank that Chinese fleet on their return trip. The Three Amigos did exactly as they’d discussed and dropped the tanker off at Chevron and the pickups off at the dealer late one night. The only thing they kept were the 8 550-gallon propane tanks. Chris and Dick each took 4 and Chris started building Dick a shelter.

They were in good shape money wise because for the long period of time they’d been at the Underground City their fixed income checks kept rolling in and piling up. They’d accumulated about 36 of the Chinese type 81 rifles, 6 of the type 81 SAWs, 6 of the RPG-7 clones and lots of ammunition. Ron, Clarence, Gary, Chris, Dick and David evenly divided the Chinese arms. They ignored the repeated bulletins on TV for everyone to turn in any captured Chinese arms.

After they unloaded the semi with the 8 550-gallon propane tanks, Matt drove it to LA and left it sitting at a truck stop. They did the entire operation at once with the crane moving Gary’s 2 water tanks and 2 propane tanks, then Chris’s 4 and finally Dick’s. Then, he went to Ron’s and finally to Clarence’s. Dick went around and reconnected all of the fuel lines. They had used up a lot of their food so everyone just ordered from Survival Unlimited. They’d checked out Ready Reserve Foods, but that stuff took too much cooking. Not a bad price, though, food for a family for a year for a little over \$3,000. Despite that, they each bought one unit from Ready Reserves for backup plus a one-year supply of the Mountain House Ultimate II packages for each member of their families. Chris and Patti bought the Ready Reserve Family Pak and Dick went with AlpineAire.

I hate to disappoint anyone, but there wasn’t an asteroid headed our way. The Gulf Stream was still flowing and no one wanted to start a nuclear war. In fact, our friends from Palmdale were doing pretty well for themselves. There seemed to be a bug of some kind going around, but they all got their flu shots and didn’t give it another thought. The CDC announced that some of those Chinese soldiers had been sick and there was some new strain of Asian flu going around. But, as I said, they all had their flu shots and didn’t pay much attention.

What Gary, Ron and Clarence didn't know was that the earthquake, nuclear incidents and the war with the Chinese had been nothing but dress rehearsals for the problem about to beset the world. Maybe that old wives tale wasn't completely accurate after all. It only took a few people contacting a few soldiers and then mingling with their friends for the flu to spread around the country. And it only took a few of those people to travel overseas, new President, remember, to move it to Europe. And, once the flu got to Europe, it spread like wildfire. Flu is a respiratory illness and SARS is just one form of the flu. SARS is caused by a coronavirus. And viruses have a tendency to mutate. The 2004 cases of SARS in China had been tied back to laboratories and the CDC hadn't seen a case in quite some time.

Once China placed itself on a war footing all sources of information dried up and the WHO and the CDC had no idea what was going on in China. The war had lasted the better part of a year but the Americans had little contact with the enemy except for the occasional militia member. When the military got around to rounding up the bodies, they were all MOPPED up and they didn't catch anything. And fortunately our friends from Palmdale hadn't either. They had no idea that their flu shots were almost worthless but they were getting old and didn't get out much.

Josh was the first one in the entire group to come down with the new virus and he spread it to David and Lorrie's entire family. Apparently they had a milder form of the virus and they all made it through. Luckily they didn't spread it to the rest of the family. Then, Amy picked it up from work and before she realized she had it, had visited her folks. I said ALMOST worthless. Gary and Sharon both got sick, but they cut off contact with everyone they knew and survived the outbreak by the skin on their teeth. Gary warned Ron and Clarence and they battened down the hatches, so to speak. From that moment on, everyone in either family was wearing an N-95 or N-100 facemask. Fortunately John and Brenda had lost their jobs and Kevin never even looked for work so the Green family was in good shape. Clarence was worried about his sister and he got her to move in with him and Lucy.

Matt was 'in-between' jobs and Chris was self-employed. He was still getting calls for shelters and was making pretty good money building them. To keep Matt busy and give him spending money, Chris employed Matt in the business. There is nothing like an emergency or 3 to make people sit up and take notice that their preparations are insufficient. And, there are some things you can really prepare for and some things you can only take preventative steps to guard against.

As soon as Gary was over the flu, he called Damon and Derek and warned them that something was going around. Gary explained that it had gotten everyone in David and Lorrie's family, Amy's family and Sharon and him. Gary suggested that they both get their butts to the pharmacy and pick up some of the N-95 or N-100 filters. They both agreed that they'd take precautions. Gary suggested rather strongly that they head for California if things got bad. He should have known something big was up, but it didn't

dawn on him until Matt from the bank in Iowa called. He said that the sickness was really bad in Iowa and that hundreds, if not thousands, of people were dying.

He asked how they were and Gary explained that whatever the bug was they'd had it and survived. Or, Gary suggested, maybe it was a different bug. Anyway, he said that the bank concluded that this was about the end of the world and did Gary want he should transfer the trust fund to the 3 beneficiaries? Gary said sure and then called the boys back. He explained that the bank was distributing the trust fund and with things the way they were in Iowa they should get to California the minute they had the money.

"Sharon, Matt called," Gary said.

"What did he want, a bigger fee for managing the trust?" she asked.

"Actually, the bank is going to distribute the trust, honey," Gary said. "Matt says he thinks it's the end of the world. I called the boys and told them to get their butts to California as soon as they got the money."

"Great," she said, but I knew she didn't mean it.

The Unprepared – Chapter 12 – Skeeter Davis Sings Again

Don't you know it's the end of the world?

That was a line out of the song. The next day I got calls from both of the boys. Damon took some of his money and bought a pickup with a trailer hitch and a small trailer. He had auxiliary tanks on the truck and 4 55-gallon drums of diesel. He was headed to Derek's to pick them up and they were on their way. Man, I breathed a sigh of relief, I'll tell you. I'd driven from Iowa straight through to California in 2001 when my Dad died and I knew they could be here in Palmdale in 24-30 hours, if they pushed. I decided to call Ronald and give him the news. By the way, I'm tired of telling a story where I talk about myself as a third party. So from now on I'll be me.

"Hey partner, how you doing?" I asked.

"Gar-Bear, we're hanging on, what's new?" Ron asked.

"The banker from Iowa called me yesterday and said it was the end of the world," I told Ron. "It would have to be for them to distribute the trust like they did. I called Wells Fargo and it will take 3 business days for them to arrange enough cash so we can get the money out. My boys are both on the way from Iowa, too."

"Why are they coming here?" Ron wanted to know.

"Didn't you hear me say it's the end of the world, partner?" "If it were me, I'd get on the phone to Paula and Jennifer and tell them to get to California in a hurry."

"Why?" Ron replied. "That's a bunch of BS."

"Well, just call me Chicken Little partner, because I think the sky is falling," I snapped.

"You're serious, aren't you?" Ron replied.

"You darned right I am," I said. "If you're short on money, let me know. I'm getting Sharon and we're going to Costco and Sam's Club."

"You said you couldn't get cash for 3 business days," Ron remembered.

"No, but we can write a check," I told him. "I'm going to call Clarence and then I'm going to the dealer and buy a used diesel pickup. Afterwards, I'm going to get a trailer and head to the store."

"What are you looking for new or used?" the GMAC salesman asked.

"I saw a used pickup over there with camouflage paint on it," I told him, "What's the story on it?"

“Back during the war we had 4 trucks go missing,” he said. “Of course we didn’t know it at the time. Then, after the war, they turned up again. They had the paint on them but very few miles. I can make you one hell of a deal on one.”

“I sort of like this one,” I said sliding into the familiar seat. “How much?”

“Fifteen thousand,” he said.

“I’ll give you twelve and pay cash,” I replied.

“Gee I doubt the boss will accept that,” he said.

“Let me talk to him,” I said.

“Mr. Olsen is it?” the boss man asked. “I can’t possibly sell that truck for 12 thousand.”

“What’s your best offer?” I asked.

“I could go down to 13.5 but no less,” he said.

“Figure the tax and license and I’ll write you a check,” I said, “I’m in a hurry here.”

“We’ll have to detail it for you,” he said.

“Fill the SOB and forget it, the clock is ticking,” I told him.

An hour later I had my truck back and this time I had title. Sharon left her car sit and we headed to Sam’s Club to stock up.

“Aren’t you afraid you’ll get arrested for driving without a license?” she asked.

“Screw ‘em if they can’t take a joke,” I replied.

“What do you want at the store?” She asked.

“Pretend this is the last time you’ll ever be able to the grocery store and govern yourself accordingly,” I replied.

Sharon started with coffee and cigarettes. I stopped her at 10 cartons because I figured if this really were the end of the world there would be plenty of them to loot later. Anyway, she loaded up on salt and pepper and meat and vacuum bags for the sealer and spices and pastas of all kind. I could see that the way she was doing it we were going to be in trouble. I dropped her off at her car and met her at home. Then I left her there after we’d unloaded and headed down Sierra Highway and bought me a trailer. Never pulled a trailer before, but I was being very, very careful.

Anyway, I headed for Costco and realized that I had a problem. So I turned around and went to Lorrie's and got Josh and told him to come packing. We went to Costco and I spent the remainder of the afternoon buying 2 of those wheeled skids of merchandise at a time. I started out with toilet paper and bought out all they had. Then I started buying the large institutional bags of flour, sugar, beans and rice. By this time they'd restocked the toilet paper so I got all they had out. I'll have to tell you, I was beginning to get some mighty strange looks.

After that, I went up and down the aisles generally filling one of those wheeled things in every aisle. I ran out of time and space about the same time. I was planning on coming back the next day and bring all of Lorrie's kids to help. But late that night Damon and Derek pulled in so I was set. I figured we go in the morning as soon as Costco opened and take Sharon along to watch the truck and trailer. My wife is a very nice lady, but I'll have to tell you that when she saw everything I bought she had a real hissy fit. The next day we went by an appliance store and I bought a chest type freezer and had them take it out of the box and put it on the trailer.

Then we went to Costco and Sharon said that Damon could guard everything because she wanted to go in the store. Turned out to be a good idea because I'd forgotten some of the medicine she took. It was over the counter stuff and you could only buy one package at once. With 3 of us shopping, we got 3 of those double packs at a time and we must have gone through the checkout a dozen times apiece. Derek followed me through the line and I wrote separate checks for each of our purchases. Those SOB's had the cash registers programmed to prevent you from buying more than one package of pseudoephedrine. We ended up with 72 bottles of the stuff, not bad, huh? There was some other stuff she took, but it wasn't limited and she just cleared off several shelves.

Now, you might ask yourself why I was buying so much if I could just wait and loot it later. I'll tell you; I figured that if I waited until later there wouldn't be much to get. Not so many smoked these days, so I could probably count on getting smokes somewhere. But, food was a different story entirely. The same could be said for toilet paper. It went a lot faster with 3 of us buying and we went home sometime after lunch and unloaded. Then we hit In and Out for a double double and headed to Sam's Club. Sharon was finally into the spirit of my efforts and we got another truckload and trailer load before we decided to call it quits. I sent Damon to H & E to buy some tarps to cover everything and we got all of the stuff unloaded and stacked on the patio.

"Gee Dad, the patio looks like a grocery store," Derek said.

"I figure we'll steal a trailer of diesel fuel once everyone dies off," I said, "But in the meantime, we need to find a tank to hold diesel fuel."

"Damon and I each have those 55-gallon drums, Derek said, "They're probably easier to find than a tank."

“Hey Ronald, I got me one hell of a deal on that pickup we borrowed from the GMAC dealer,” I told him.

“Yeah, Clarence and I did too,” Ron replied. “How much did you pay?”

“\$13.5,” I told him.

“Clarence and I went to the dealer together and we got ours for 13 even because we were buying 2,” Ron laughed.

“Have you guys been to Costco and Sam’s Club yet?” I asked.

“Yeah, but Costco ran out of toilet paper,” Ron announced, “So we had to clean out Sam’s Club instead.”

“I have a few pallet loads of toilet paper if you run out, Ron,” I told him.

“Were you the crazy guy they were talking about at Costco?” he asked.

“Probably,” I told him. “We bought another freezer and filled it with meat. The boys arrived and they helped me shop.”

“I think I’ll run over and see how much stuff you have,” Ron said.

“I’ll put the coffee on,” I told him.

“Have you seen the news?” Ron asked.

“What’s going on in the world, Ron, I’ve been busy,” I replied.

“A whole lot of people are dying,” he said. “I think that your family must have been pretty darned lucky that bug didn’t kill you too.”

“I was about as sick as I can ever remember, partner,” I told him. “The only thing I can think of was that either we didn’t get whatever is going around or we were just lucky.”

“Did you notice how few people there were in the stores?” he asked.

“Yeah, Costco was half empty and it used to be so full on a Saturday you couldn’t get around.” I agreed.

“I noticed that they’re starting to run out of things,” Ron said.

“We mostly bought food, drugs and toilet paper,” I explained. “I got a few cartons of cigarettes, but I figured we could loot them after everyone dies off.”

I answered the doorbell and there stood Clarence. "Come in partner, Ron's here," I told him.

"Ronald, longtime no see," Clarence smiled.

Ron looked at his watch and said, "Yeah, what's it been 3 hours already?"

"You all stocked up Clarence?" I asked.

"I spent all the money we had," he answered.

"Better get out the guns fellas," I advised. "I got a feeling that after stuff runs short the survivors are going to be helping themselves. We probably ought to go up to Sandy's and see what she has left in stock."

"Sandy died, Gary," Ron told me.

"Just her or everyone in the store?" I asked.

"Everyone," he answered.

"Come on guys, we're going gun shopping," I announced.

"I wouldn't feel right looting her store," Ron said.

"That's ok, then we'll just leave it for the bad guys to get and use against us," I agreed.

"What about the cops?" Clarence asked.

"I haven't seen a patrol car in several days, Clarence," Ron replied.

We went up to Sandy's and broke a window. That set off her silent alarm to the Sheriff's station but nobody came. We emptied the shop of guns, ammo and equipment. To tell the truth, there really wasn't much stuff in the shop, she must have been doing a land office business before she died. Better we should have the stuff than some other guy who might use it against us. On the way home we spied an empty drug store or two and sort of helped ourselves. Some of the stuff we took we didn't need, but we didn't want any junkies getting their hands on any narcotics. I grabbed a loose leaf PDR.

"What do you think we should do Gar-Bear?" Ron asked. "I don't like the idea of us being spread out all over the east side of Palmdale."

"The houses on either side of us are empty," I told him. "They all took off last week. How's about we find us an excavator and a crane and move your guys' shelters up here?"

“Where are we going to live?” Damon asked.

“Damon, most of the houses are empty, just pick one,” I told him. “I’ll get Patti to show you who has moved out.”

I really felt bad about Dick dying but there was nothing I could do about it. Patti had told me he’d gotten sick and tried to keep on working but had keeled over one day. I knew a virus couldn’t live long without a live host so we sprayed Dick’s house with a germicide and hoped we gotten any bugs. We must have, nobody got sick. Dave’s pickup was parked in front of his place and nobody had seen him for a while. So we masked up with some N-100 masks and went to check on him. Dave was a little young for the virus to have gotten him, but he was dead in his bed. If it had been summer, the place would have stunk to high heaven, but it was winter and he had the furnace turned off. We rolled him up in his blankets and took him to the backyard where we buried him. We found a replacement box springs and mattress in another house and fumigated Dave’s house as well.

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“It’s been a week since we fumigated those houses, do you suppose it’s safe to move in?” Derek asked.

“Hell, I don’t know,” I told him. “I guess you can move in and if you don’t die it’s safe.”

I was 99.9% certain it was safe, but who can really know these things? The place sure smelled of Lysol so I figured if the germs hadn’t died from the cleaners they’d been gassed to death. They’d used the hospital grade Lysol disinfectant to fumigate both houses. I had seen an ad for it on the Internet and bought 2 cases of disinfectant, a case of the spray and a case of the hand soap. According to the ad, Hospital disinfectant is highly effective against the HIV-1 (AIDS) virus. Tuberculocidal, Virucidal, bactericidal, fungicidal. EPA registered. New Light Scent – lighter fragrance than before! Pleasant yet not overpowering with frequent use.

Kills 99.9% of germs in 30 seconds. Quaternary/ethanol formula maintains OSHA Blood borne Pathogens Standard decontamination compliance. An independent research laboratory determined this formula is the only professional surface disinfectant available in the US that passed all their tests for disinfection 1. Provides Hospital Disinfection including efficacy against TB. Meets AOAC Germicidal Spray Product Test standards for hospital aerosol disinfectants: Germicidal, Fungicidal, Tuberculocidal, Virucidal. For use in: dental offices, physicians’ offices, hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, ambulances, kennels, veterinary offices, day care centers, health clubs, toilet areas, patient rooms, waiting rooms, and laboratories.

A CD V-715 can’t protect you against a virus and there are so many different ways someone might attack the US, accidentally or intentionally. Couldn’t hurt to have a little disinfectant around could it? Something nice and strong like they use in hospitals, might

just do the trick. Or maybe not, a lot of people die in hospitals, don't they? I guess the amigos better wait to loot the hospital for medical supplies for at least 30 days. But, they'd better not wait too long or someone will have beaten them to it.

"CQ, CQ, CQ," I spoke into the mike. "This is KD6GDQ in Palmdale, California. Is anyone out there?"

"Nobody answering, huh?" Ron said. "I tried 10-meters and 20-meters and didn't pick up anybody."

"You have your shelter finished?" I asked.

"Chris gave us a hand, and everything is hooked up," Ron explained. "We had one hell of a time moving that set of antennas, though."

"Didn't you get anyone?" I asked.

"Some guy talking Swahili or something," Ron laughed, "But I didn't understand. It could have been Russian for all I know."

"Have you seen many people around Palmdale?" I asked.

"Not many partner," Ron replied. "How about you Clarence, have you seen many people?"

"Nary a one," Clarence replied. "Isn't it about time we went looking for some cigarettes, I'm about out?"

"Gary, you get your boys to ride with us and we'll go shopping," Ron suggested.

"Where do you want to start?" I asked.

"Let's start on the west side and work our way east," he suggested.

Just about every little mall in Palmdale has a cigarette store. By the time we'd finished the west side, we had enough smokes to last us for a couple of years. However, Clarence suggested that cigarettes and tobacco might make good trade items so we spent a couple of days 'shopping'. I've got to tell you, if you weren't picky about the brand, we had whatever you wanted. It didn't seem like those stores carried much more inventory than they had on their shelves, though. Cigarettes were pretty expensive in California. After we finished cleaning out the cigarette stores we headed to the grocery stores and loaded up on toilet paper. The stores were pretty picked over, but we figured that if we ran out of food we could just go door to door and help ourselves. We figured wrong on a couple of things but in the end it didn't matter.

A MOPP suit, level 4, is pretty good protection against a virus. Maybe that's why they call them NBC protection. After a while the charcoal runs out the sleeves, but this particular virus was a respiratory virus and those M-40 masks worked just fine. About 2 months into the pandemic that had killed most of the world off, who should show up but the military. I'd managed to get all of the food under my patio, but there was one hell of a pile of toilet paper on my back patio covered with a tarp. I guess they figured we weren't infected after 2 months because all they had were those flimsy little disposable N-95 masks.

"Who's in charge here?" the Sergeant asked.

"We sort of runs things as a committee," I replied.

"How many are there living here?" he asked.

"Let's see, Derek's family makes 5, Damon's family makes 9, Amy's family makes 12, Lorrie's family makes 19 and my wife and I make 21. Chris and Patti make 25 and Ron's family makes 30. Clarence and his family make 33. That's it, 33 people, I guess, Sergeant," I told him. "You find any other people around Palmdale?"

"Maybe a few dozen small groups like this one," he replied. "You folks have enough of everything to get by?"

"We bought a little food when the epidemic started and we can plant a garden come spring," I told him.

"What about protection?" he asked.

I slid back my coat so he could see my .45. I saw his eyes flit around like he was sizing the place up.

"Sergeant, there are probably about 4-6 rifles on you at the moment if that's what you want to know," I explained. "We have M1A's, M16's, and Mini-14's plus a bunch of those Chinese arms like those SAW's of theirs. If you're just curious about our well-being, that's one thing. But if you have any ideas about trying to take us on, you'd better give it some second thought."

"I get a creepy feeling when a gun's being pointed at me," he said.

"You must feel just awful at the moment," I agreed. "So, what's the story about the country?"

"There are pockets of humanity everywhere," he replied. "Most of them seem to be pretty well prepared too. But in the cities where it was very crowded, most of the people got sick and died. How did you folks manage to avoid getting sick?"

“We didn’t all avoid it, but it must have been a weaker strain,” I told him. “My daughters both got sick as did their families and they passed it on to me and my wife. The guy down the street died from it and so did the guy across the street. A lot of the people just packed up and bolted.”

“Mind if we have a look around?” he asked.

“As a matter of fact, I do,” I replied. I tipped my hat and you could hear the clank of rounds being chambered from several directions.

“Been looting?” he asked.

“Took some cigarettes and toilet paper, but we didn’t get much food,” I explained.

“What about drugs?” he asked.

“We cleaned out one or two pharmacies to keep the junkies from getting the stuff, but except for the drugs we use, you’re welcome to the rest,” I told him.

“No rush,” he replied. “If you want, you can box up the extra stuff and we’ll get it the next time we come by.”

“You setting up a garrison here in Palmdale?” I asked.

“Lancaster. Say, I don’t believe you told me your name,” he responded.

“Gary Olsen. The other families are Derek & Mary Olsen, Damon Olsen, Amy Olsen, David Colbin & Lorrie Gibbs, Chris & Patti Peoples, Clarence & Lucy Rawlings and his sister and my wife’s name is Sharon.” I explained. “Plus there’s a bunch of kids.”

The Unprepared – Chapter 13 – Getting Along

Don't like that first person rap, so I'll go back to being an observer. Gary didn't totally trust that Sergeant so he got some of David's boys to trail them discreetly and see just how big of a 'Garrison' they had up in Lancaster. The boys took 2 trucks and planted one in a parking lot on Sierra Highway and the other in the Target parking lot in Lancaster (10th Street West and Avenue K). They were communicating on CB channel 23, USB and The Three Amigos were following the conversations. It turned out that the garrison was about 2 rifle squads and they really did seem to be Army. Or, National Guard, but what's the difference, they were military.

Had to be regular Army or they probably would have had their families with them, the guys finally concluded. So, 2 rifle squads wasn't going to be much help if trouble came looking and if they weren't who they appeared to be, wouldn't be all that much trouble to take out. Since Gary had told the Sergeant they'd give him the excess drugs, they went through everything they got from the 2 pharmacies and boxed up anything they thought they couldn't possibly use. Before dark they climbed in a couple of pickups and delivered those drugs to the Sergeant. It sort of gave them an excuse to be out. They swung by Lancaster Community Hospital on the way home and located a bunch of Ron and Clarence's medications. They also loaded up on IV sets and drugs like D5W, D5NS, Ringer's and Normal Saline. Community was the 'heart' hospital.

They were out early the next morning hitting other drug stores but only taking things they needed. They got everyone's prescriptions and a few over the counter items plus a pretty fair assortment of antibiotics. They sort of figured they'd have to be doing their own doctoring from now on and the Sergeant asking them about drugs had gotten them to thinking that they could be better prepared. They were going to have to scrounge around sometime and find some books on homeopathic medicine; if not for them, then for the kids.

"What are we going to do when we run out of meat?" Ron asked.

"I hadn't thought about it Ronald," Gary replied. "Any suggestions?"

"Well, I figure that any chickens that survived don't have that virus and we ought to look around for some beef and pork," Ron suggested.

"We still have that SINCGARS radio, I wonder what frequency the Army is on?" Gary remarked. "I was thinking we could call that Sergeant and see if he'd seen any live-stock."

"I'll get on the radio and see if I can raise them," Derek offered.

"We don't know their frequency or their call sign, Derek," Gary said, "So I don't see how that is possible."

“They’re back...” Jason announced.

“Who’s back?” David asked.

“The Army Dad, and there’s all of them,” Jason replied.

“Somebody give me an M16 and put the word out,” Gary said. “I’ll go see what they want and see if I can get their frequency and call sign. The rest of you get your guns and cover them.”

“Sergeant, do something for you?” Gary asked.

“You can lower the barrel of your M16,” the Sergeant replied.

“Sure thing,” Gary said, tipping his hat and lowering the rifle. They ought to have the hat bit figured out by now, he was going to need a different signal.

The sound of many rifles slamming home rounds was evident in the morning quiet.

“My name is Sergeant William Wilson and I’m regular Army, Mr. Olsen,” Bill announced. “We were talking last night and it makes more sense to garrison our forces in Palmdale than in Lancaster. Since you have a lot of empty houses in this tract, we were wondering how you would feel about our moving our small garrison here?”

“Aren’t you under orders to garrison Lancaster?” Gary asked.

“No sir,” Sgt. Wilson replied, “Only to garrison the Antelope Valley. And we don’t really have enough people to do that effectively.”

Gary tipped his hat again and everyone rose in place and headed for where he was standing. The soldiers looked about and realized that had they been the bad guys they’d probably be dead. When everyone was gathered, Wilson had a question.

“What’s your signal to open fire?” he asked.

“Heh-heh-heh,” Gary chuckled. “Good question, but I don’t know you well enough to answer. The Sergeant here wants to move their 2-squad garrison here to Moon Shadows. Anybody opposed to having a little extra protection?”

“Any of your boys a Medic, Sergeant?” Clarence asked.

“Yes, we have a Medic,” Wilson replied.

“Well, I’d rather have a Corpsman, but a Medic will do,” Clarence continued. “I vote yes.”

"I'll go along," Ron replied.

Chris just nodded, as did the others. An Army Medic might not be a Navy Corpsman, but it beat the hell out of what they didn't have. (A Navy Corpsman sewed me up one night; it hardly left a scar.)

"We were going to contact you and get your frequency and call sign," Gary explained.

"Our call sign is Golf Kilo One and we use a SINCGARS radio that frequency hops," Wilson said. "Is that a Hummer antenna up on that mast?"

"Yep, it's a war souvenir," Gary replied.

"You have a SINCGARS radio?" Wilson asked.

"Yeah, but it's out of the same Hummer we got that antenna from," Gary explained.

"We have a spare base antenna and can swap out an AN/VRC-92A for the radio you have," Wilson offered. "That's the one with..."

"Two long range radios and two power amplifiers," Gary finished for him. "I knew there was something familiar about that call sign, Wilson. I used it in a story I wrote called The Gordian Knot. That's how I know about the SINCGARS radios, I did some research."

"I don't believe I ever read the story," Wilson said. "When did you write that?"

"During the fall of 2004, I think," Gary replied. "What will we use for a call sign?"

"What's the name of this housing tract?" Wilson asked.

"Moon Shadows," Gary replied.

"Your call sign will be Mike Sierra One," Wilson said.

Time check: March 29, 2010...

It turned out that Wilson and the two squads, each led by a Corporal, were out of Ft. Irwin. The next nearest garrison was in Victorville, about 50 miles away. The military had come through the epidemic in pretty good condition, all things considered. Apparently the CDC suspected a virus early on and had warned the military, but by the time it was confirmed, it was almost too late to warn the civilian population. They'd tried to put out warnings, but the administration in Washington had sat on the information just a little too long. Gary persuaded Wilson to see about picking up enough SINCGARS radios for all of their pickups. Wilson said to keep the one they had and he'd try, but no promises.

It turned out to be easier than Wilson thought because there was a ton of SINCGARS radios at Ft. Irwin. SINCGARS had been replaced by the Joint Tactical Radio System (JTRS - called "Jitters" in military circles) family of radios which ranged from low cost terminals with limited waveform support to multi-band, multi-mode, multiple channel radios supporting advanced narrowband and wideband waveform capabilities with integrated computer networking features. These radios conformed to open physical and software architectures. The JTRS had developed a family of affordable, high-capacity tactical radios to provide both line-of-sight and beyond-line-of-sight C4I capabilities to the war fighters. The family of radios covered an operating spectrum from 2 to 2000 MHz, and was capable of transmitting voice, video and data. However, JTRS was not a one-size-fits-all system. Rather, it was a family of radios that are interoperable, affordable and scalable.

He also provided 200amp 28vdc alternators and batteries and had a mechanic add the extra alternators and 2nd batteries to the civilian vehicles. Only when the vehicles could power the SINCGARS were SINCGARS installed.

On another issue, there really wasn't much of a shortage of anything. There were location problems but no real shortages. The US had a lot of people before and very few people now. And, the same could be said for about anything you could imagine. Provided you could get your hands on something like PRI-G or PRI-D, there was more fuel available than anyone could ever consume. And, if your vehicle stopped running, there were lots of good used and new vehicles sitting around. Money had been backed by the full faith and credit of the US so it wasn't worth the paper it was printed on. Maybe that's why the trust fund had been distributed. Better the beneficiaries get stuck than the bank, huh?

Some things were in limited supply however and The Three Amigos and everyone at Mike Sierra One were out scrounging for the valuable things. Cigarettes might get stale, but they beat the hell out of corn silk. Gold and silver was of some limited value so they took it when they found it but didn't go looking for it. Dried foods were precious and so were oxygen absorbers. Fresh meat was very valuable and Sgt. Wilson had directed the folks to herds of hogs, cattle and flocks of chickens. There was enough alfalfa stored north of the Palmdale airport on Avenue M to feed the cattle for a very long time and there were feed stores in the area for hog feed and chicken feed. They gathered things like laptop computers because if kept in a correct environment their life didn't start expiring until they were turned on. They gathered anything that was manufactured that they would be hard pressed to replace or repair. It hadn't taken long for the nation and the world to turn to a barter economy.

"I never thought I'd end up being a farmer," Gary complained.

"This isn't too bad," Ron said. "There's all of this equipment to use. It had to be tough in the 1950's."

“Mostly used row crop tractors back then Ron, and harvested the corn 2 rows at a time,” Gary said. “I can’t remember for sure but I think my dad sold his first self-propelled combine in about ‘66 or ‘67. I think that International Harvester had them before that but New Idea and Ford brought theirs out in the ‘60’s, as best as I can remember.”

“We going to LA tomorrow?” Ron changed the subject.

“I suppose we should take 3 pickups and 3 trailers,” Gary said.

“Neither Clarence nor I have a trailer,” Ron pointed out.

“You have trailer hitches and we’ll start the trip on Sierra highway,” Gary suggested. “I’m pretty sure that place where I bought my trailer has been abandoned.”

Not only was the place abandoned, but also there were 3 very nice trailers sitting there just begging to be taken. Gary unhooked his 12’ trailer and hooked up one of the 24’ jobs. Ron and Clarence also hooked up 24 footers and off to LA they went. Gary had Damon and Derek riding with him and David’s 4 boys had paired off and were riding with Ron and Clarence. They had installed rifle racks in the back windows of the 6 passenger pickups and each rack carried an M1A, an M16 and a shotgun. Gary said he’d take the M1A and the boys could fight over the other 2 guns. Damon only liked shotguns and Derek was a National Guard type so no fight ensued.

Gary positively didn’t like the tactical buck or slugs, but they had a lot less recoil so he used the ammo but refused to shoot a shotgun. The roads were still in very good repair and they didn’t have any trouble getting to LA. Gary knew of 2 grocery warehouses, one in Vernon-Smart & Final Iris and one in Brea-Albertson’s, formerly Lucky’s. The warehouse in Vernon was the closest, so that’s where they went. Vernon is basically in South Central, a ways south of downtown. Gary was looking for institutional packaging and he figured that Smart and Final was a good bet.

They finally found a pay phone with a phone book that hadn’t been ripped off and got the address for the warehouse. They didn’t see any people. It didn’t take all that long to load the 3 pickups and trailers and they were just bringing out the last load when they heard an obvious shotgun blast. They had their weapons slung across their backs and unlimbered them and rushed to help Damon who was standing guard. Not all of those shotgun blasts had been Damon’s. Someone else had got the first lick in but Damon had finished the job before he went down. I guess that was the difference between using birdshot and a mixture of tactical buckshot and slugs. Damon’s right pant leg was covered with blood but once they got the pant leg off they realized he wasn’t too badly hurt. Gary applied a pressure bandage while the others scurried to finish loading.

Gary pulled in at a liquor store and went in and grabbed a bottle of bourbon to ease Damon’s pain. Then, they headed back to Palmdale just as fast as they could, considering the pickups and trailers were full. It took about an hour and a half to make it to Moon Shadows and Gary had given Charlie, the Medic, the heads up that they had a shotgun

wound in a right leg. Charlie couldn't give Damon morphine because of the booze, but he had plenty of Lidocaine and managed to dig all of the birdshot out. Damon got a nice bandage and a tetanus shot and Gary got his behind chewed royally. Gary told Charlie they didn't have any painkillers to handle such an emergency. Charlie said they had darned good first aid kits, because he'd seen them. Charlie added one package of Morphine Sulfate 10mg/ml 1ml Ampoule 25/Pkg and did the standard lecture about the M on the forehead, etc., etc., etc.

Charlie warned them that Gary couldn't take the morphine because he was diagnosed with COPD. However, his recommended alternative, 2 Vicodin ES washed down with a healthy shot of booze wasn't at all well received. Gary dug around in his medical supplies and added 2 EpiPens to the morphine in case he needed it. The only problem with epinephrine is that it expires and Gary asked Charlie if he could get current EpiPens if they were required. Charlie said probably not but he had some epinephrine inhalers with 3 times the shelf life of the EpiPens. Gary asked if he could get a couple because of his COPD and Charlie obliged.

Since each of The Three Amigos had the same first aid kit, Gary gave 8 of the ms ampoules to Ron and 8 to Clarence. From now on, they'd carry their first aid kits with them when they went out on salvage operations. They were also going to take more people, if at all possible. Three 24' trailers hold a lot of 'stuff'; especially considering that the 'stuff' was all in institutional sized containers. They offered to share their haul with the Army guys and it was very much appreciated.

One of the problems they were going to have to face was the fact that one of these days the natural gas supply would dry up. They were surprised that it hadn't already. So the next salvage operation was right in Palmdale, looking for different jets for their stoves and furnaces. They ended up hitting most of the stores and repair shops but by the time they were done, they were able to switch to propane at a moment's notice. Sgt. Wilson had hauled back 2 military 60kw portable diesel generators and a tank of fuel for each the last time he'd been to Ft. Irwin. Gary had never seen these generators before. They were Baldor TS-80T's. (GSA Contract Number GS-07F-0213M; 60kw single phase 120/240 switchable to 2 different 3 phase settings)

The generators were the Cadillac of portable (towable) generators and listed for \$35,000 each. They burned from 2.7 to 4.9gph of diesel fuel. The puny 37-gallon tank needed refilling every 12 hours on average. Leave it to the government to pay an unreasonably high price for a portable generator. But, they got GSA pricing so they probably paid a lot less than 35 grand for the units. On the other hand, when Gary had been stationed on San Nicolas Island back in '64, they got their power from a towed generator that probably dated back to 1940. These particular generators were classified as multi-fuel types and would run on anything the Hummer could burn.

They decided that they'd better get their butts back to LA and hit the Albertson's warehouse in Brea before someone ransacked it. Wilson agreed to send along 6 soldiers since they had been so willing to share the food from their trip down to Vernon. They got

Matt to take Damon's place. It so happened that Gary knew a back way into Brea and the grocery warehouse. It involved picking up the 60 freeway off the I-15 south of San Bernardino and heading west to Rowland Heights. That put you on Harbor Boulevard and after a brief but exciting trip over a mountain right at Beckman Instruments, which was just north of the grocery warehouse. The actual address was 200 North Puente Street, Brea, CA.

Memo to self: Alpha Bravo Charlie Delta Echo Foxtrot Golf Hotel India Juliet Kilo Lima Mike November Oscar Papa Quebec Romeo Sierra Tango Uniform Victor Whiskey X-ray Yankee Zulu

The Unprepared – Chapter 14 – The Wild, Wild West

The 2 infantry squads were gone most of the time because they were helping the other groups in the area. Some of these other people, according to Wilson, had survived more out of luck than by being prepared. It didn't make much difference to the folks there at Mike Sierra One how the people had managed to survive, they were just happy that there were more people around. They talked about getting together with some of the other groups but for some reason they couldn't fathom, Wilson was more than a little reluctant to even tell them where the other people were located.

"What's the deal with these other groups, Sergeant?" Ron finally asked.

"They weren't really prepared so most of them ended up scrounging randomly for the things they needed to survive," Wilson explained. "Things were pretty picked over, you folks probably got there first, and everything they got was hard to come by. They developed a very protective attitude about what they have and are inclined to shoot first and ask questions later."

"Ok you have our attention," Gary said, "Tell us more."

"Well, some of the groups are based along ethnic lines," Wilson continued. "There's a Hispanic group that all lived in one neighborhood and a Black group that all lived in another. A couple of the groups are religious groups, Baptist I think. Then there's a small group of wealthy folks that had enough money to buy their way out of the situation until the money became worthless. That should give you some idea what's out there."

Without realizing it Wilson had pretty much identified the locations of the other groups. In Palmdale there were 3 areas that were principally Hispanic and one general area that was Black. All of the wealthy folks lived out on the west side of town beyond the AV Mall. And in between the rich people and the Mall were a lot of religious conservatives. Up in Lancaster, it was possible to make similar group identifications, but none of them knew Lancaster as well as Palmdale. Everyone who lived in Moon Shadows was a transplant from Los Angeles and Ron was from the San Gabriel Valley. Clarence was probably from Inglewood or one of the 'better' areas down below, but he never said and no one thought to ask.

"I think we ought to get out and meet some of the other survivors," Ron suggested later.

"I don't know about that, Ron," Clarence responded. "I didn't like the shoot first and ask questions later part."

"I've managed to get by with the philosophy of live and let live," Gary added. "It's no secret where we are, let them come to us."

The areas on either side of 47th Street East next to Moon Shadows and across the street were vacant lots that the city had zoned as commercial. More than once someone

had tried to build in the areas but the residents had always gotten up a petition drive and blocked the project. They put the livestock on the large area to the northeast of the intersection after fencing it in and constructing a chicken coop and hog house. That had been Gary's idea; he said you hadn't lived until a fresh breeze brought in the smell of money. With the ample supply of empty houses, everyone had his or her own place. David and Lorrie had moved their things as had Amy.

Wilson had suggested that they should put a gate across the entrance of the housing tract and had brought some back from a fencing place in Lancaster. They set the posts and hung the gates but generally left them open. No one was expecting any trouble and they didn't guard the livestock or the housing tract. Apparently they figured with all Palmdale had been through, earthquake, radiation and a war, that people weren't likely to be of bad character. Any way you slice it, that's naïve. Ron didn't necessarily agree with the others but he kept his opinions to himself, for a change.

When they'd looted Sandy's store and taken all of the guns, they'd ended up with some Winchester rifles and Ruger Vaqueros. In another store they'd looted, they found some cowboy style gun belts, just like they wore in the movies. At one time in his past, Gary had gun belts and Rugers out the ears and he just naturally gravitated to wearing a Vaquero and carrying a Winchester. It seemed fitting somehow because he still wore that straw hat he'd acquired back in '96. It was the filthiest looking hat you ever saw but it kept the rain off. With his feet the way they were with the neuropathy and all he couldn't wear cowboy boots comfortably, but that didn't stop him from trying.

"Where did you get the western style shirts?" Ron asked.

"They belonged to my brother-in-law and I got them when he died back 6 years ago," Gary explained. "You remember when I went to AV Hospital for a cold and almost died? He died of a pulmonary embolism while I was in the hospital. He had cowboy boots and western shirts and Charlene gave them to Sharon for me."

"The way you're limping those boots must be killing you," Clarence laughed.

"They are, but can you imagine a cowboy with tennis shoes?" Gary laughed. "Even tennis shoes hurt my feet. We need to find a store that sold Rockports and loot it."

"Hey you guys," Jason said interrupting, "We're missing a cow."

"What do you mean missing a cow?" Gary asked. "Where could it hide?"

"I think he means we've been rustled, Gar-Bear," Ron suggested.

"Saddle my horse and we'll get up a posse," Gary said.

"That would be kind of hard, partner, we don't have any horses," Ron laughed.

“Oh, yeah, huh?” Gary replied. “Well we can’t just let people rustle our livestock, we don’t have many to begin with.”

“Getting some horses wouldn’t be a bad idea,” Clarence said completely off the subject.

“We’ll tell Wilson and have him keep an eye out for someone holding a barbeque,” Ron suggested. Getting horses wouldn’t be a bad idea. A lot of those folks out at Antelope Acres had horses.

“We can get some horse trailers from down on Sierra highway, but I’m not much into riding,” Gary replied. “Why would we want horses when we have pickups?”

“There are places a horse can go that you can’t get a pickup,” Ron observed.

“In the Antelope Valley?” Gary responded. “Show me just one.”

So, Ron did. In fact he showed Gary dozens of places in the AV where you couldn’t get to by truck but could by horse. Over the course of driving around the Valley, Gary got Ron to go west on Avenue D towards Gorman. There was an area about 20 miles west on Avenue D that Gary wanted Ron and Clarence to see.

“Fellas, I think they called this place Holiday Lake,” Gary explained. “The poppy fields are on the south side of the road back there and the aqueduct runs down there in the valley. Those are the Tehachapi Mountains on the other side of the aqueduct. I used to drive through here all of the time on my way to San Francisco and I always figured that if I were to move it would either be to Holbrook, Arizona or out here.”

“Lots of grass isn’t there?” Clarence noted.

“Lots of grass and I suspect we’d find about 100 550-gallon propane tanks over in the residential area we passed,” Gary said. “We could get some new mobile homes and set them here. Then, we could move out our livestock and there’d be room for horses, Ron.”

“What about water?” Ron asked. “I doubt we can find anyone to drill a well.”

“This was a water district so it already has wells,” Gary replied. “Probably the only thing they need is power to get them running. As far as power goes, those wind turbines are right on the other side of that mountain. We can either move some or run a power line down here.”

“You’ve been making plans, I see,” Ron suggested.

“After we got rustled, I got to thinking that we ought to get out of the housing tract,” Gary responded. “This isn’t so far to move and it’s a lot better area for ranching. There are enough new mobile homes sitting around that we could build a nice little community.”

“What about our shelters and all of our things?” Ron asked.

“I’ll tell you partner, I don’t know if I could spend another minute in those steel coffins,” Gary replied. “I should have bought 3 of those 10’ by 50’ shelters from USS and connected them all together. Instead I only have 2 20 footers and I get claustrophobia. If we decide to move and build a community out here, we should probably center it on a community building like I’ve done in a lot of my stories. We can pick up either the singlewide or doublewide mobile homes.”

“What are you going to call this place?” Clarence asked.

“I was thinking about The Three Amigos Village, but that’s too long of a name,” Gary smiled. “How does The Village sound?”

“I like that, but I’m not so sure about moving out here in the middle of nowhere,” Ron said.

“We’ll talk about it after we get out of the movies tonight,” Gary suggested.

“There aren’t any movie theaters open, idiot,” Ron grouched.

“I know, but there has to be some reason you want to stay in town and get our cattle rustled,” Gary replied. “Look, let’s take our time and build the place and when it’s ready to occupy, we’ll move. If you still want to move your shelters, it’s fine by me.”

“Where do we start on this idea of yours?” Clarence asked.

“Well, let’s go to Tehachapi and get the wind turbines first,” Gary suggested. “We won’t have water until we have electricity. And then we can grade slabs to sit the houses on. After that we can put in a basement for the Community Center and put in the backup generators and things before we build the building.”

“What backup generators?” Ron asked.

“I was thinking that in a city the size of LA we could find some standby generators at some of the hospitals or businesses and move them up here,” Gary explained. “I don’t want to do this piecemeal so maybe we should start with several 1Mw units. There are a lot of huge propane tanks down in LA, too, so if we move all of the tanks from Holiday Lake and set them up here we can empty one of those really big tanks and move it. Once it’s empty, we should be able to transport it to The Village. We can probably move an awful lot of 10,000-gallon tanks and have enough propane to keep us in power and heat for a very, very long time.”

“What would you do if I didn’t know anything about propane?” Ron asked.

“No one is indispensable, Ronald,” Gary said, “We’d figure something out. I’m sure that you guys would have come to the same conclusions about living in Palmdale that I have.”

“Clarence, what do you think?” Ron asked.

“It makes sense to me, Ron,” Clarence replied. “At least this place looks like we could see anybody coming for a ways and at least defend it.”

“So when do you want to climb the mountain?” Ron asked Gary.

“We’ll drive up to Tehachapi tomorrow and see about the wind turbines, Ron,” Gary grinned. “We have to figure out which ones we want and how were going to mount them before we do anything else.”

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As of 1999, the Tehachapi Wind Resource area is the largest wind energy producer in the world. Kern County produces as much wind energy as the rest of the United States combined. The Tehachapi Wind Resource area produces more wind energy than Germany or Denmark or Japan, other regions with high interest in the production of electrical power from wind energy.

There are more than 4,600 wind turbines in the Tehachapi area. Many of them are visible from Highway 58 east of Tehachapi. Still others are visible along Tehachapi-Willow Springs Road, a paved highway which goes north-south along the east side of Tehachapi. These wind turbines collectively generate 1.4 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity per year. (The typical fluorescent lamp fixture with two 4-foot bulbs requires 80 watts of power, so 1.4 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity could continuously and simultaneously create light for nearly two million such lighting fixtures.)

Each wind turbine includes automatic controls, which sense wind direction and speed. When the wind is low the turbines are disconnected from the power grid. When the wind is too high for safe operation, the turbines are braked to avoid overstressing the equipment. During appropriate wind speeds the turbines are automatically pointed into the wind to maximize power generation. Newer turbines also adjust turbine blade angles so as to generate more power over a wider range of wind speeds. The latest turbines, constructed in Tehachapi by Enron Wind Corp., have a capacity of 750 kilowatts, and there is even a new turbine with 1.2 Megawatt capacity. The latter turbines include many automatic “intelligent” controls, which optimize performance over a widening range of wind speeds.

The Three Amigos went to Tehachapi and had a look around. But they couldn’t tell anything by looking so they found a control house and started examining the records. After much study, they decided on the 750kw Enron turbines. They discussed it and decided that if they started with 15 turbines, they’d have a little over 10Mw of capacity and a

spare turbine in case one was down for service. The following day they went looking for the equipment they'd need. The fellow who'd installed the shelters had used a 175-ton crane and they knew where his business was. They started with the crane and then went to Littlerock and picked up 3 concrete delivery trucks and a batch plant. After that they located a large trencher that must have been used to put in water mains or something.

There was the lumberyard on Avenue P (Rancho Vista) that supplied them with all of the materials they needed for forms. Once the batch plant was moved and a lot of rock, sand and cement in place, they were about ready to begin construction. After deciding on a western boundary for the property, they laid out the footings for the wind turbines and when they cured, poured the bases. Meanwhile, others were laying out the plot for the community. Gary had suggested, probably based on his stories, that they put the community center in the center. Perhaps based again on his stories, he suggested that they make it very big, 350' square or 122,500ft² of space.

"Why do you want the building so darned big?" Ron asked.

"Ron the only thing this building is going to cost us is our labor," Gary began. "Now you remember that story where I put a shelter underneath the basement of our homes, right?"

"I remember you talking about it, but I didn't read it," Ron said.

"That's ok partner only about 20 of the Squirrels read my stuff anyway," Gary laughed. "I don't want a small shelter that we'll have to expand later. I figure to put in a shelter with walls and ceiling about 6' thick. We'll cover that with 10' of compacted earth and build a basement on top of that with walls and ceiling about 2' thick. We can put all of the electrical generators and store food and supplies in the basement. Above that, we can build a Community Center and put in a theatre, a bowling alley and a commercial kitchen."

"You want everything under one roof?" Ron asked.

"Makes sense to me Ron," Clarence said. "That way we only have to build one building."

"Do you have any idea how much concrete a place like that would take?" Ron asked.

"Don't have a clue, partner," Gary laughed, "But that big building in Tehachapi on the highway is a cement plant so I don't think that will be a problem."

"That's going to take a lot of rebar and stuff," Ron continued.

"Ronald, dang it, there's enough building materials in LA to build a dozen of the buildings," Gary replied.

"I hate to rain on your parade," Derek said, "But you fellas didn't figure this out right. You have to have the control center for the wind turbines before we can use the electricity that they generate to power the pump to draw the water."

Don't you just hate it when someone points out the obvious? So far they'd been tanking water for the concrete. So, they stopped after the wind turbines were installed and headed to LA to find the backup generators, rebar and the other things they needed. They took everything you can possibly imagine including popcorn poppers, commercial appliances, commercial kitchen worktables, walk-in coolers and freezers and anything else you can think of including 10Mw of propane powered generators to install in the basement.

The guy who had lived between Gary and Chris back in 1988 was named Joe and Joe was an ironworker. Joe had talked about his exploits to the point that Chris and Gary knew they could handle the rebar. However, there were only 33 people in their housing tract and there was no way in their opinion that they could get the building done by themselves. So, they enlisted the aid and opinion of Sergeant Wilson.

"You can see what we accomplished this summer, Bill," Gary pointed out. "We have 15 of those 750kw wind turbines installed. Under the tarps are 10Mw of generating capacity and enough equipment to completely equip a shelter and a Community Center."

"How big of a building is this going to be?" Wilson asked.

"Gary was talking about 350' square," Ron answered.

"You boys would need the Corps of Engineers to build a building that big," Wilson laughed. "What do 33 people need with a building that's over 100,000 square feet?"

"Gary was going to put in a theatre and bowling alley and commercial kitchen," Clarence replied.

"Why don't you go up and down instead of out?" Wilson asked. "If you made the building smaller, say 120' square you could probably manage that."

"Good idea Sergeant but we'd lose too much space," Gary responded. "120' square is only 14,400 square feet. We'd need a 9-story building to get the 122,500 square feet of a building 350' square. I'm not talking about building the Mall of America here. That's a big building with 4.2 MILLION square feet and 4 stories. I was thinking of a basement over a shelter with a 2-story high building on top. No way we can go any smaller."

"If that's the case, you're going to need lots of help," Wilson shook his head. "And frankly, there are not enough people left in the Antelope Valley to build the place in a couple of years. How thick were you going to make the walls of that shelter?"

"6' of reinforced concrete," Gary replied.

“Well, I don’t want to rain on your parade, but 122,500 divided by 27 and multiplied by 2 are almost 9,100 yards of concrete. You can double that for the floor. Then you have 4 walls 350’ long and probably 12’ high and 6’ thick. 350 times 4 is 1,400 times 12 is 16,800 times 6 is 100,800ft³ divided by 27 is 3,373⅓ yards of concrete. I know that’s a little higher than it really is, but I’m just estimating here. That gets you the shelter minus the support posts. You’re looking at maybe 4,000 yards of concrete,” Wilson explained. “And then you’re looking at maybe a third of that for the basement,” Wilson continued, “So you can make that about 5,500 yards. That’s 458 truckloads in those 12-yard trucks you have there. 33 people in an 114,000 square foot shelter would give you about 3,450 square feet apiece. Is that what you really intended?”

“I guess not, no,” Gary replied. “I never thought of it in those terms.”

“Look Gary,” Wilson continued. “120’ square with 2’ thick walls would give you a shelter of about 13,456 square feet. That’s about 408 square foot for every person in your new community. Even if you had 100 people you’d still have 134 square feet per person. Now if you want, I’ll talk to some of the groups around the valley and see if they want to join you.”

“I don’t know about that,” Ron said, “One of those people rustled one of our beef.”

“If whoever took that cow is part of the community, you won’t have them stealing from you,” Wilson pointed out.

“We’ll talk it over and let you know Sergeant Wilson,” Gary announced.

The Unprepared – Chapter 15 – A Change of Plans

I can't recall if I've mentioned it before, but life is a series of compromises. By cutting the size of the building from 350' square to 150' square they'd eliminated 100,000 square feet and had a building small enough that they could manage, with a little help. Gary decided that since the shelter was well underground and both it and the basement would have 2' of concrete, they'd probably be safe enough. The truth was that they weren't much further from the San Andreas Fault than they had been when they lived in Palmdale; but another earthquake of that magnitude wasn't due for 130 years. Sergeant Wilson said that the Army had shut down all of the nuclear power plants because there was no one to run them and no one who really needed that electricity.

After making more seven-ten rule calculations, Gary decided that 48" of concrete enough because it only provided a protection factor of about 1,000,000. That level, he decided would be enough. That defined the building; 150ft square external dimensions throughout, with subbasement walls and lid 4' thick, basement walls and lid 2' thick. Between the concrete plant and the quarries in the area, raw materials wouldn't be a major problem

Wilson had several groups that were willing to join them, but none that were insistent. They'd talked it over and certain prejudices appeared. No one wanted the Baptists that was for sure. Not that they weren't good people, they no doubt were, but they kept coming around every week before all the problems practically demanding that you attend Lancaster Baptist Church this coming Sunday because the pastor had a really fiery sermon on tap. Yeah well, so did Gary and Ron and Clarence's churches, but they never needed to beg for business. Color wasn't an issue but it was Clarence who had vetoed inviting the Blacks. And, no one spoke Spanish and they didn't want anyone around who refused to speak English, nothing personal, just a fact. One by one they dismissed the various groups until they got down to one.

The remaining group was something of a mystery; Wilson hadn't been too specific about them. Ron got Wilson to tell them where the group was and The Three Amigos and Chris went to visit with them. This must have been the shoot first and ask questions later group. The group had a governing group about like they had at Moon Shadows. Ben Jackson was the spokesman and there was a fella name Russ Rose, a 3rd named Harold Smith and a 4th named Arnie Hayward. They lived in Mojave and the group had about 40 members, all from the same neighborhood.

"You the folks looking for people to join them?" Ben asked.

"We are, I'm Gary Olsen," Gary said extending a hand. "The short ugly guy is Ron Green, and that's Clarence Rawlings and this fella is Chris Peoples. We all currently reside in the Moon Shadows housing tract in Palmdale at 47th Street East and Avenue R."

“Wilson said you’d be around but we’re not totally convinced that it would be a good idea to join you,” Jackson said.

“Then we won’t trouble you any further Mr. Jackson,” Gary replied. “But just so you know we weren’t sure either and we came to meet you folks and see if we could get along.”

“I didn’t say we wouldn’t join you, just that we had to talk it over after we got to know you,” Jackson replied.

“Have you driven down and seen the ranch we’re building on Avenue D around 300th Street West?” Gary asked.

“Is that the place with those wind turbines?” Jackson asked.

“Yes, we have 15 of the $\frac{3}{4}$ Megawatt units,” Ron butted in. “Plus we have another 10 Megawatts of generating capacity. There are wells next door at Holiday Lake that we can power up and have water.”

“There ain’t no lake there,” Russ chimed in.

“Actually there is,” Clarence said, “If you can call that little mud puddle a lake. It’s only about a block long.”

“And you’re planning on ranching the area between 300th Street West and Quail Lake?” Jackson asked.

“We weren’t planning on going any further west than those wind turbines,” Gary answered. “It’s the area bounded by Avenue A on the north 300th Street West on the east, Avenue D on the south and the line where we built those wind turbines.”

“That’s about what, 12 square miles?” Jackson asked.

“More or less, I suppose,” Gary answered. “We’re building a village right in the center of the area just south of where 300th Street West ends after it turns to the northwest.”

“We saw the big pile of stuff under the tarps and the equipment,” Arnie said. “You have slabs poured for a lot of homes.”

“We were planning on putting in manufactured housing,” Gary explained. “And in the center we’re going to put a Community Center.”

“Wilson said you had some big ideas,” Jackson chuckled.

“We’ve scaled it back from 350’ square to 150’ square,” Gary said. “And we cut the size of the walls for the shelter from 6’ thick to 4’ thick.”

“So we’d have what about 146 times 146 square feet in the shelter, basement and community building?” Jackson asked. Obviously Wilson had given him a lot of information. “That would be 21,316 square feet divided by 75 people or about 284 square feet a head. That makes a hell of a lot more sense.”

You will please take note that Jackson used the term ‘we’ for the first time in the conversation when referring to the ranch and village. Ron picked up on it right away and wondered if the others had. Without beating you to death with numbers, they would need a whole lot less concrete, excavating, etc. On one of their trips to Los Angeles, they’d come across a company that sold steel buildings. So, once they had the basement sealed over, it would be a snap to erect the building. It would probably have to have a flat roof considering the dimensions, but the Antelope Valley didn’t get that much snowfall so that really didn’t matter. They’d have to shrink the size of the theatre and maybe put the bowling alley in the basement, 4 lanes, but they’d agreed among themselves that 150’ on a side was doable with or without help. Help would be much better of course.

“Why don’t we have a barbeque and let everyone meet each other?” Jackson suggested.

“Barbeque?” Ron’s nostrils flared.

“Yeah, we’ll butcher one of our cattle and have a barbeque,” Jackson replied. “You do like barbeque don’t you?”

“How many head of cattle do you have Ben?” Gary asked.

“What say Russ, about 40?” Jackson checked.

“That sounds about right, give or take,” Russ agreed.

“Do you have any poultry or hogs?” Clarence asked.

“Just beef, if you want chicken or ribs, you’ll have to bring your own,” Jackson replied in a friendly manner.

“When do you want to have this shindig?” Gary asked.

“Well, if we butcher tomorrow, the beef will have all week to age, so how about in 6 days on Saturday?” Jackson suggested.

“Say one or two o’clock?” Gary asked.

“That’s should be about right, it will give us some time to visit,” Ben agreed.

"We'll see you next Saturday between one and two," Gary agreed.

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"You were awfully quiet Chris, what's on your mind?" Gary asked.

"I was thinking that if we used I-beams to support the basement ceiling we'd use a lot less space," Chris replied.

"What did you think of the people there in Mojave?" Ron asked.

"At first I wasn't really sure, but I think they'll be ok," Chris answered.

"I liked them after that Jackson settled down a little," Clarence said.

"He did come on a little strong at first, but I heard him use the word 'we' later in the conversation when he was talking about the building," Gary observed.

"I wondered if anyone caught that," Ron said. "Boy I about stuck my foot in it when he said barbeque."

"That's why I asked how big his herd was, partner," Gary laughed. "Between us we have a fair amount of livestock. How many horses did we end up with?"

"About 80," Ron replied.

"Any of them named Salina?" Gary asked.

"Well I'll go have a talk with them tomorrow and see," Ron chuckled.

"You get tack for all of them?" Gary asked.

"All of them except Salina, you can ride her bareback," Ron laughed.

Excerpt from 'The Ark':

"The last time I rode a horse was in 1976," Gary protested "And I darn near got killed!"

"Relax partner, that horse is as gentle as a lamb." Ron kidded his friend.

"That's what they said in 1976," Gary lamented refusing to mount the horse, "They gave me a horse named Salina that they only used for kids to ride. First time they ran the horses, she took off like a bat out of hell. Thought I was going to get killed."

"Well, if this one bolts on you, you can shoot her in the head," Ron consoled, laughing.

“Yeah, right!” Gary said as he put his rifle in the scabbard and gingerly mounted the horse (named Salina).

As you can see, Gary had a long history remembering a horse named Salina. If she hadn't been dead for 30 years, he'd probably been able to pick her out of the herd. The simple truth is that a horse is a big and powerful animal and Gary liked his horses at a distance. Say about a mile away. And as much as Gary was convinced he'd never get on a horse again, Ron and Clarence had other plans.

“What time did you tell them we'd be there?” Ron asked.

“Between one and two,” Gary replied. “Ben didn't say anything about potluck, but I suppose we'd better take something with us.”

“There's all that booze we got from the liquor stores,” Clarence suggested.

“We can take a case, but we'd better get to know them a little better before we give it to them,” Gary said. “They could be a bunch of teetotalers.”

“Most of the teetotalers in California either belonged to AA or the Baptist Church,” Ron said.

A bit of an overstatement perhaps, but you get Ron's drift. The Three Amigos missed the Palmdale group, but AA says where 2 or more are gathered... They essentially had their own meeting every time they got together whether they talked AA stuff or just about the weather. They were now a long time sober.

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The ladies weren't about to go to a barbeque without taking along something. They baked cakes and made a lot of things that were pretty tough for some people to come by. The fellas explained to Wilson that they were having a get acquainted barbeque with the folks in Mojave. Wilson said that he knew about that get together. He also said that he wouldn't mind moving his garrison but the higher ups told him that the new village was too far from the heart of the Antelope Valley and had refused his request. If they didn't mind, he'd just stay at Moon Shadows. Wilson said that the Army had a gift for the new community once it was set up. One of their units had been to Geneseo, Illinois and had cleaned out Springfield Armory.

“Since you people will probably end up hunting on occasion, we have a dozen rifles for each new community,” Wilson said. “We're in the process of rounding up all of the arms we can and redistributing them.”

“Well, if that's the case,” Ron inquired, “Why haven't you given us some of the M16's. What are you folks using for rifles these days?”

“Us? HK-416s and HK-417s. No more stopping to clean the weapon during the middle of a battle. Now, that is something I can do for you, but I had to wait for you to ask,” Wilson smiled. “I’ll get you 100 of the M16A2’s that have had what amounts to a depot rebuild. The bad news is, I can only get you 100 cases of ammo but the good news is I can get you all of the magazines you need.”

“We have a lot of 5.56 ammo,” Ron said. “Plus we have a whole lot of ammo for those Chinese type 81 rifles. Hey Gar-Bear, want some M-16s?”

“M-16s? I used ‘em ‘cause we had to. Real POS. Sure would like to get to the H&K factory on the east coast and get some of those new 416s and 417s. They, like the M1As and Mini-14s, use the gas piston.”

Wilson ignored Gary. “There simply aren’t many people left in the world or in the country,” Wilson said. “We’re getting reports that as much as 75% of the population of the world was killed off by that virus, whatever it was. I think the reason that the war ended when it did was because the Chinese troops got sick.”

“Did anyone ever find out what the story was on the virus?” Gary asked. “Was it a biological weapon of some sort or just an odd occurrence?”

“We think it was just some dang virus that started in China like most of them do,” Wilson explained. “We’re not sure exactly what it was, but we speculate that it was related to SARS. There seemed to be two versions of the thing, a milder form that made you wish you were dead and a more virulent form that granted your wishes.”

“Most of my family got sick,” Gary commented, “It must have been the weaker strain.”

“It’s all gone now,” Wilson observed. “Couldn’t live outside of a living host and only a few people escaped without getting one form or the other.”

“Sergeant, what about all of those Chinese weapons,” Clarence asked. “What ever happened to them?”

“We gathered them all up and have them stored at Ft. Irwin, why?” Wilson asked.

“How about we get some of those?” Clarence asked. “We have a few and they really aren’t a bad firearm.”

“I can get you all of anything you want as far as the Chinese weapons go,” Wilson said. “You boys get yourself a semi and a trailer and I make arrangements with Ft. Irwin for you to get all you can carry.”

“You seem to be pretty free with the arms,” Ron ventured.

“Back in colonial America everyone was armed with something,” Wilson recounted. “We in the military realize that the country had strayed from its roots, but as long as the politicians were in charge, we just followed orders. Now, there isn’t any government and we can’t protect everyone. As a matter of fact, the military is being slowly disbanded as people’s enlistments run out. I suppose we’ll keep a small cadre of people to maintain the equipment, but the rest of us are going to be released from active duty eventually.”

“Where will you go when your enlistment is up?” Ron asked.

“Some of us have families that we were able to protect,” Wilson smiled. “I do and I was thinking maybe you fellas could set a trailer out at The Village for those of us that had families. I wouldn’t mind having the wife and kids a lot closer than Ft. Irwin.”

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The barbeque was a major success and the ladies bringing those cakes and pasta salads and the like voluntarily sealed the deal. They mentioned to Ben and the others about Wilson’s offer and Ben suggested that they get to Ft. Irwin and get the weapons before they got too picked over. While The Three Amigos didn’t think there was much chance of that happening, they agreed to go to Ft. Irwin before they started the construction of the community building. They set the visit up with Sgt. Wilson and took 2 semis instead of one. True to Wilson’s word they got a semi load of Chinese armaments and they were free to pick and choose. They took rifles and ammo, plus some of the Chinese equivalents of the LAW’s rockets and the AT-4’s.

The Army tried to give them 100 rebuilt M16’s and 100 cases of ammo. Gary agreed to take the ammo but told them ‘no thank you’ to the rifles, much to the surprise of Ron and Clarence. They also gave them 24, not 12, of the Super Match rifles. The explanation was that they were still 2 separate communities and each community was being allowed 12 of the M1A rifles until the supply was exhausted. The only ammunition they had available for the 7.62x51mm rifles was a case of Black Hills match grade 175gr FMJ target ball and a case of Black Hills 175gr SPBT with each rifle.

They ended up with more arms than they’d probably ever need. If 75% of the population had died off and that applied to the United States that meant that the population of the US was down to 75 million. They ran that past Sgt. Wilson and he told them that that wasn’t right. The US had been harder hit than some of the other countries and he’d be surprised if there were 20 million people alive in the US. China and the US had probably been hardest hit by the pandemic and places like Europe hadn’t fared much better. South America and Africa with their widely spaced populations had done much better.

“Sgt. Wilson, is there any way we could get some of the HK 416s and 417s?”

“How many?”

“Fifty of each. Same number of weapons as you offered us in the M16s.”

“Perhaps. Why?”

“It’s personal, but the M16 rifle is positively a POS. My M1A fires first time, every time as does my Mini-14. Clean it, don’t clean it... it doesn’t care. Why did the military change from the M16s and M4s if they were the hot ticket?”

“I’ll see what I can do.”

Gary had sat down and reconsidered the old wives tale about things coming in three’s. There had been the earthquake that was one; the leak at Diablo Canyon that was two, the terrorist attack that was three; the war with the Chinese that was four; and, the pandemic that was five. By all accounts if the old wives tale was true, they had four more to go. He mentioned it to everyone, but no one could see what else could happen and if it were something like an asteroid or Yellowstone blowing its top, there was nothing they could do about it. Anyway, over that past 6-7 years, the world had been through enough.

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Time check: July 4, 2012...

The Village had been completed for over a year. They had a huge ranch that covered half of the area between the old Holiday Lake settlement and the old I-5. The Community Center had been constructed and all of the utilities were up and running. The natural slope of the property meant that it had been easy to put in a septic system and while they were digging they had planned for The Village to quadruple in size and then doubled that. It had been a chore hauling in all of the doublewide homes after the Community Center was finished because no one really had any experience assembling the homes. They’d managed, somehow, and had even gone around and gotten Cyclone fencing and fenced in the entire 12 square mile area. Places like the prison in Lancaster and California City had provided a lot of the fencing and the razor wire to top it off.

Wilson and his two Corporals had retired and had taken up residence at The Village. They also talked Charlie into moving there and introduced him to one of the daughters of a family from Mojave. They’d gotten married and settled down. They’d gotten 4 mobile home style classrooms from a school in Palmdale and set up a medical clinic. They didn’t consider taking things looting anymore, just a reallocation of resources. For example, they’d taken a portable X-Ray from AV Hospital and set up an X-Ray and lab. Charlie had taken some courses at Ft. Irwin and he was more like a Navy Corpsman in his abilities. The other two classrooms were used as hospital wards. That gal he married was a lab technician from AV Hospital so they mostly had the medical angle covered. And anything they couldn’t handle would generate a radio call to Ft. Irwin and a real doctor could be there in a little over an hour. Four times a year, the Army sent a Dentist to tend to their needs.

Their combined herds and flocks were producing more than enough animals to butcher and they were doing their best to grow them. They'd finally gotten old Gar-Bear on a horse, but he much preferred a pickup. They'd resolved that by finding him an old Willys Jeep and he could go most places the others could and he didn't have to shoot the horse. At Wilson's suggestion, they ran a patrol around the perimeter of the ranch. Some of the things they moved had been almost a bigger challenge than they'd bargained for. It was easy to talk about moving those 10,000-gallon propane tanks, but a whole lot of back busting work. Every home had its own 550-gallon tank and they had 100 of the 10,000-gallon tanks before they were through. They'd gone as far as 100 miles away to get propane to fill those tanks, but in the end they had 900,000-gallons in the large tanks and 50,000-gallons in the smaller tanks.

Gary had turned 69 in March of that year and maybe the extra exercise he got had kept him alive. Ron and Clarence were looked over by a specialist from Ft. Irwin and Ron was a little clogged up but not as badly as one might have expected. They had brought more homes than they needed and had set them up to allow for expansion of the community. Derek had become good friends with Bill Wilson, the retired Sergeant, and they had slipped over to Ft. Irwin and reallocated 12 M1A2SEP tanks. Basically they had more of the Abrams than they had crews so they were spread out around the ranch as mobile artillery. It never hurts to be a little cautious, there were, after all, about 20 million Americans still alive.

Wilson had submitted a request before he retired for the H&K rifles. A few months after he retired, a HEMTT delivered the 100 rifles. Each came with a complete set of barrels, an ACOG and a Leupold Mk IV BDC scope for each of the HK-417s.

The Unprepared – Chapter 16 – Old Wives Tales

Have a way of being true. Derek didn't figure they'd be going up against any tanks, so most of the 40-round load out for the tanks was 20 rounds of M1028 Canister, 10 rounds each of M829 APFSDS and M830 HEAT. He had 80 extra rounds of ammo for each of the Abrams, about half of it Sabot and HEAT, but those canister rounds were their best line of defense against infantry if they were ever attacked. Not that anyone expected to be attacked, but one could never be too careful.

Left to their own devices and with a little input from the military, most of those 20 million Americans had become farmers. In case you haven't done the math, 20 million surviving Americans only accounted for about 6.67% of the population before all of the problems began. It had been a crescendo of escalating events that had done in America and the world.

Some things were beginning to become hard to get. Things like gasoline for example. To overcome that problem, they'd gotten some underground tanks and pumped out the gas from several service stations. Adding PRI-G had restored the fuel, but PRI-G and PRI-D were becoming hard to find. A trip to Los Angeles and gotten them a small truckload, but it was only a matter of time before all of the fuel was consumed. That might not be in The Three Amigos lifetimes but sooner or later everyone was going to be back riding horses. With that being the case, they began to take expeditions around California looking for draft horses and horse drawn equipment. Modern technology is great, but it wears out and eventually not even the most skilled mechanic can make it work anymore. Animals, on the other hand, reproduce so they were pretty much self-renewing.

Down in Acton, CA a little ways down the road from Palmdale is a collection of 'junk'. At least that's what Gary had always thought of that pile of horse drawn equipment. It wasn't junk any more. Sure they had tractors, but tractors require fuel and parts to maintain. You couldn't plant blocks of steel and harvest new parts, but you could plant alfalfa, corn, oats and barley and feed the livestock. In the end they had enough horse drawn equipment, most of it was a restored antique, to allow them to farm the ranch indefinitely. The character of the community was changing too. The closer they got to their roots, the more they acted like the people in those old movies.

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The previous time check I gave you was July 4, 2012 but you'll notice that I didn't mention Independence Day. No disrespect to the history of the country implied or intended, but Independence Day and most of the holidays, except for Christmas and Easter, just didn't mean quite as much as they had before. There wasn't a President, as far as they knew, and everybody was essentially equal because they were either living or dead. One didn't need any special excuse to give a loved one a present and all of the candy in the stores wasn't fit to eat. None of the residents of The Village said anything about being Irish and Memorial Day was filled with too many bad memories of all the people who had died. Nobody wanted to take time off from work to celebrate Labor Day and Colum-

bus Day and Veteran's Day was only special to a few. They celebrated Thanksgiving but it wasn't turkey day anymore. Then, there was Christmas and Easter.

Easter Sunday falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after MAR-20, the nominal date of the Spring Equinox. Many sources incorrectly state that the starting date of the calculation is the actual day of the Equinox rather than the nominal date of MAR-20. Other sources use an incorrect reference date of MAR-21.

A little known fact is that the timing of the full moon is based upon the Metonic Cycle, a method of calculating the date of the full moon known to the ancient Greek astronomer Meton, who lived in the 5th century BCE. This calculation occasionally diverges from the actual astronomical data. For example, in the year 2019, the date of Easter according to a precise astronomical calculation would be MAR-24. However, the Western Church will observe it on APR-21.

Easter Sunday in the West can fall on any date from March 23 to April 26th. The year-to-year sequence is so complicated that it takes 5.7 million years to repeat. Eastern Orthodox churches sometimes celebrate Easter on the same day as the rest of Christendom. However if that date does not follow Passover, then the Orthodox churches delay their Easter - sometimes by over a month. And now you know about when Easter occurs.

Why they kept Thanksgiving is anyone's guess. It was probably just a celebration of another harvest. You may recall that I said that they gathered a lot of computers, right? They were only used to account for the herds and inventories of their foodstuffs and military equipment. Plus one of them was a mapping computer with one of those GPS things but the satellites we beginning to fail so they'd pulled the GPS and tossed it on a shelf. Slowly in some cases and not so slowly in others, the US and the world were reverting to a previous age and a long forgotten time.

"Whatever encouraged you to get on that horse?" Ron asked.

"Can't get my Jeep to start and Matt says it needs parts that are sort of hard to find," Gary explained. "I got me the oldest looking horse I could find and named her Salina. But, if she gives me any trouble, I'm going to shoot her in the head."

"So are we going for a ride today?" Clarence asked. "I don't want to take the trouble of having a horse saddled if we ain't."

"Go ahead Clarence, I want to see the ranch one last time," Gary announced.

"You planning on dying?" Ron asked.

"Can't do that partner, I'm going to outlive my dad if it kills me," Gary replied.

“You can probably count on that partner,” Ron laughed.

“Count on what Ronald?” Gary asked.

“It killing you, butthead,” Ron laughed harder.

They walked those 3 horses all around the perimeter of the ranch. It was indeed about 12 square miles 3 miles by 4 miles but the perimeter was about 14 miles long. They had several breeds of horses, but the ones the geezers preferred were American saddle horses, which were mixed breeds that were gentle to ride. It took them most of the morning to circumnavigate the ranch. They pretty much had a saddle bound AA meeting that morning recounting all of the misadventures of their youth. Gary decided that if he could get the same horse every day, maybe he could get more ‘exercise’. The Three Amigos were getting old and they didn’t happen to notice the men who were scoping them from across the valley on the other side of the dried up aqueduct.

What the men on the other side of the valley had failed to note was that every evening after dark Ben and the folks from Mojave let out their growing group of Rottweiler’s. And, Derek sent someone out to man the tanks every evening before the dogs were released. In tandem, these two forces served to protect the ranch and The Village. They didn’t have any roving patrols since they’d acquired the tanks. And they’d acquired some APUs from Ft. Irwin that allowed them to keep the systems of the Abrams powered up without needing to resort to either the engines or the tanks batteries. They had learned to Improve; Adapt; Overcome. I’ll bet Clint Eastwood never thought that those 3 words would become something that Gary and his amigos had come to live by, or that a small community on the western most edge of the Antelope Valley would adopt it as their motto.

The Chinese hadn’t done a lot of damage to Los Angeles and the other cities as they passed through. A few buildings had been destroyed but they had been too focused on the withdrawing American forces to loot and pillage and were too disciplined and short of time to do much raping. Thus communities like Los Angeles were veritable gold mines of supplies. Some of those supplies came at a cost, however, and Damon getting shot in the leg was just the first of many injuries they incurred reallocating the supplies from Los Angeles. They had secured protective vests by reallocating some police supplies and even picked up an assortment of LEO-only gear. They had very few available people but half of the people pulled guard duty while the others salvaged.

Maybe they had just been incredibly lucky, who is to say, but to this point in time, they only had a few wounded and nobody killed. They didn’t like those trips down to the City of the Angels because as often as not, some survivor would show up and dispute their claim to whatever it was they were salvaging. They were growing all of their food by now and all of the things like spices had done an Emeril so about the only things they were looking for were repair parts for their vehicles and always ammunition. Speaking of which, they had to put in a rather large bunker just to hold all that they had accumulated.

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“This is tank 10. I have movement on the other side of the aqueduct,” the radio announced.

“Describe movement?” the dispatched inquired.

“It appears to be a force of infantry,” was the reply.

The Village didn't have a klaxon; they decided against it. What they had instead was some of those 102dB Siren Sound Piezo Buzzers acquired from Radio Shack installed in every home and building. All it took was the push of a button and everyone in The Village was wide-awake and looking for a weapon while someone turned off the alarm. They were holding circuits on each alarm and a pulse of electricity turned them on and a pushbutton in each building turned them off. The gunners for the tanks checked with the control center in the Community Center and headed for the tanks on their north perimeter. The remainder of the men piled into pickups and followed. Ben blew the whistle that called the dogs and they were led off to be locked up so they wouldn't get in the way. By this time the residents of The Village numbered more than 100 and were evenly divided between male and female.

Anyone over the age of 13 who could qualify with a firearm was permitted to participate in the defense of the community. As it happened, in addition to the 4 gunners and 4 observers in the tanks, the group could field over sixty people armed to the teeth and very skillful with his or her weapon of choice. There had been much discussion about Mojave's policy of shooting first and asking questions later and nothing had really been resolved. One thing that everyone agreed on was that if an armed force showed up after dark and tried to sneak in, they'd die. The offending group was within range of 3 of the 4 tanks on the northern perimeter and they loaded canister in anticipation of the order to fire. When they fired up those turbines, the advancing force paused, unsure of what the sound was.

The people from Mojave and the people from Moon Shadows, now operating with a new radio call sign of Tango Victor, weren't the type of people you wanted to try and sneak up on. There wasn't a Palmdale garrison any more but the Army kept a small reaction force at Ft. Irwin. Wilson got on the SINCGARS radio and put out a Mayday to Ft. Irwin before he joined the people on the line.

“How many of them are there?” Ron whispered.

“I can't see that far; ask Clarence, he has the night vision goggles,” Gary whispered back.

“Clarence, how many of them are there?” Ron whispered to Clarence.

"I can't really tell Ron, maybe about 50-60," Clarence quietly replied.

"Hell we have them outnumbered 4 to 1," Ron whispered loudly.

"How do you figure that?" Gary whispered, "There are only 60 of us."

"We have 3 tanks that can hit them," Ron replied. "These people are dead meat."

Very prophetic Ronald except these people are armed with a lot of Chinese arms. Those arms include the PF-89 80mm LAW, the equivalent of the AT-4, and some of those PF-97 80mm Fuel Air Explosive Launchers that are intended for soft targets. The PF-97 is a lightweight, self-contained, recoilless rifle used primarily by infantry squad for engagement of soft targets. It fires an 80 mm Fuel Air Explosive (FAE) warhead, with negligible recoil. The weapon consists of a free flight, fin-stabilized, rocket-type cartridge packed in a one-piece, one-off, fiberglass-wrapped tube. The launcher is watertight for ease of transportation and storage, with an optical sight for aiming. The round of ammunition is self-contained in a disposable launch tube, and is fired by a separate rocket motor.

It boiled down to who got the first shot and this was one of those shoot first ask questions later situations, wasn't it? Derek spoke into his radio and the 3 tanks each fired a round of canister ammunition. Bad idea. While the center tank took out a goodly number of the attackers, the effective range on the canister round was only 600-meters. Derek directed that the tanks on the ends reload with HEAT rounds and the center tank with canister. The PF-89 rounds were totally ineffective against the Abrams armor but someone got off one round from a PF-97. If the fella had fired on either side of the tank, he'd have probably taken out a fair number of the Villagers, but the idiot fired directly at the center tank hitting it.

"Fire," came the command a little too late. A lot of the Villagers were already reaching for a second magazine. The exchange was very brief. The Villagers were spread out and not affected by the PF-97 round. And, they had the advantage of 3 tanks that had fired their second and third rounds. The PF-97 was devastating against soft targets but couldn't hurt an Abrams. Non-fatal injuries among the enemy-0 and among the Villagers-4; fatal injuries among the enemy-100%, fatal injuries among the Villagers-0%. Yeah, shoot first and ask questions later works very well at 2:30am especially on a moonless night when you know the turf and the other guy doesn't.

Why, you might ask, would an enemy attack almost in front of a tank? You have to know the tank is there before you can avoid it and those Army types were very adept at camouflage. By the time a flight of 4 Apache attack helicopters arrived from Ft. Irwin, all of the enemy bodies were stacked waiting for dawn so they could dig a hole and bury them. A couple of Blackhawk's arrived shortly after the Apaches and they evacuated the two individuals whose wounds were serious enough to require hospital attention and the services of a surgeon. One of those individuals was Clarence who had taken a round in

the part of his body that was sticking up the highest. He'd be sitting on a pillow for a while, but he'd live.

The other seriously wounded person was Russ Rose who had taken a round to his left femur that had shattered the bone. Charlie patched up the 2 people with grazes and they left the gunners in the tanks for the remainder of the night. They had a small supply of JP-5 and they refueled the Apaches and sent them on their way. Everyone else assembled in the cafeteria of the Community Building to discuss what had gone right and what had gone wrong.

"A tank is not an anti-personnel weapon except at close range," Derek announced. "I wasn't thinking or we'd have had a third person on the tank using the 50-cal. The gunner can't shoot the coaxial machine gun and the cannon at the same time. And the observer was reloading the cannon. What we really need is some artillery."

"There isn't any spare artillery at Ft. Irwin," Wilson announced.

"The Iowa National Guard had those M-115 8" cannons," Derek replied, "But it is a long way to Iowa and they might not be there."

"We could try the Marine Corp Training Center at 29 Palms," Wilson suggested. "I wish I had a list of all the armories and units in California."

"The National Guard has 118 armories, 10 air bases, and three army bases located throughout California," Gary said. "I have a list on my computer, but I think the 143rd was in Richmond, California. They either had tanks or artillery or both, I never checked into it all that much."

"I think we should go to Richmond, wherever that is," Derek suggested.

"Richmond is at the north end of the East Bay in San Francisco," Gary explained. "I'd take a fair number of security if I was going to Richmond."

"Why is that Dad?" Derek asked.

"There is no good way to get to Richmond," Gary said. "Take that mapping computer and plan a route. But, you're going to need those transports to get these self-propelled artillery pieces down from there. It's too far to drive them so you'll need the M911/M747 Heavy Equipment Transporters."

"Those were replaced by the M1070 tractor and M1000 semi-trailer, Dad," Derek said.

"Whatever; you get my point, right?" Gary grouched.

"I think Ft. Irwin will loan us some if I can talk to the right persons," Wilson added. "What about ammo?"

“Get some of that air-bursting stuff and some of the M107 Air Burst rounds and some of those DPICM’s,” Gary suggested. “Better look for an instruction manual and plenty of warheads and those new Modular Artillery Charge Systems that replaced the bags. Sarge, do you think we could come up with any of the M712 Copperheads?”

“Maybe, maybe not, it depends on what they have in Richmond,” Wilson replied.

“If they have Paladins, they ought to have the M992A1 FAASV,” Gary went on.

“Where did you ever learn so much about our systems, if I might ask,” Wilson was grinning.

“On the Internet, Sergeant, hell they had all kinds of information at Global Security,” Gary explained. “Some of it was dated and some of it prospective, but I spent a lot of hours on that website.”

“How many do we need and where do you want to set them up?” Derek asked.

“We need all you can get and you soldier boys can figure out where to place them,” Gary said, “But a little ways from the Village in case we get counter fire.”

The Unprepared – Chapter 17 – For It's Hi Hi Hee

...in the field artillery. The caissons keep rolling along.

The residents of the Village now had 16 of the M109A6 Paladins to add to the defenses of the Village plus 4 additional M1A2SEP's. They had taken all of the munitions, regardless of what they were. They had borrowed 24 of the HET's but had used 4 of them just to haul munitions. They also picked up a few other things, like the M72 LAW rockets, some M136 AT-4 rockets, several 5-ton truckloads of the M14, M16 and M18 APM's. The next SOB that attacked The Village was in for a big surprise. They returned the HET's to Ft. Irwin and started to get ready to get on with life.

This was not to happen, getting on with life, I mean. Apparently the word had gotten out about a prosperous ranching community on the western edge of the Antelope Valley. These were good folks who would have probably shared had they been asked. But when the asking came from the barrel of a gun, the answer was inevitably the same. They just dug several mass graves while they had that tractor on the other side of the Aqueduct to avoid having to dig them later. It's sort of funny about how the word gets out about communities 'ripe for the picking' and how slowly the word gets out that it was an exercise of suicide. Perhaps, they finally came to realize, they'd be better off letting a few of the attackers survive and get out the word that The Village wasn't a pushover. Clarence had healed up ok and after sitting on a pillow for a while was able to get out with the others and repel attackers. Russ Rose would always have a limp, but it only slowed him a little.

The advantage they found to their having artillery was that with the range of the Howitzers they rarely had anyone get close to the ranch anymore. And over a period of time, enough of the attackers had escaped that the level of attacks dropped off. There is nothing like advertising. Ft. Irwin replaced their munitions on a round for round basis. If an attack consumed 50 artillery shells, they were given 50 replacements. Other munitions like the M72's and M136's were in short supply everywhere and were not replaced. But, they could still have all of the Chinese munitions they wanted and on one bright and sunny day made a trip to Ft. Irwin to pick up nothing but PF-89's and PF-97's.

It was probably a good thing that the word about how tough they were was getting out. The word was that they weren't going to get any more of the 155mm artillery shells or MACS. There are a lot of pebbles on the beach and all it took was a little patience and a little time and some large trucks to fill a second bunker with more artillery shells than they could probably use.

"I assume your Dad was in the military," Wilson said to Derek one day.

"Yes he was, Bill," Derek acknowledged.

"30 year man in the Corps or the Army?" Wilson went on.

“How about a 4-year man in the Air Force,” Derek laughed. “The closest my Dad ever got to combat was watching the History Channel.”

“He seems reasonably knowledgeable for an Airdale,” Wilson observed.

“He said every time he saw something on TV or in someone else’s patriot fiction he was consumed by an inexplicable desire to learn all he could about it.” Derek explained.

“And, he and I have the same hero, George S. Patton.”

“He seems to have a bit of a grasp of combat,” Wilson said. “Maybe a little rough around the edges, but I’ve seen worse in my career.”

“His skill level might be equivalent to that of a Company Commander, but hardly more than that,” Derek said. “I don’t believe that either Ron or Clarence were in the military. But what these guys lack in training, they more than make up for in cunning. They are all recovering alcoholics with long drinking careers. To be able to drink for a very long time, you need to be pretty dang clever.”

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In the movie ‘Patton’, Patton had a line where he said something like, *Rommel, you magnificent bastard. I read your book.* Maybe he did and maybe he didn’t. Rommel had authored or contributed to 5 books in his lifetime. Patton never said which one in the movie. It could have been ‘Rommel Papers’, ‘Attacks’, ‘Problems for Platoon and Company’, ‘Infantry Attacks’, or ‘Rommel: In His Own Words.’ Patton had a book or two also, written based on his WW II Diaries and published long after his death (1947?) called ‘War as I Knew It’ and another called ‘Next War, Volume 6’. *I do not have to tell you who won the war. You know, the artillery did.* - Gen George S. Patton

Those self-propelled howitzers became their primary means of defense. Even though they were located closer to The Village, they had a much longer range and their selection of munitions was far superior to those available for the Abrams. Basically they were arrayed much as the Abrams were 4 to each side of The Village. They had taken time to register the guns in accordance with Army Field Manual 6-40 and were very confident that they could hit any target out to the 16,000-yard range of the guns. Although the Paladin was designed for ‘shoot and scoot’ they were using them for ‘shoot and bury’. As I said, the attacks against the ranch and The Village stopped after a while.

These attacks, Gary decided, didn’t constitute the sixth and hopefully final event in the chain. Most, but not all, of the attacks came from the north, the direction of the Aqueduct. The smarter people came from any of the other 3 directions. Attacking from the open area of the Aqueduct appeared to be easy, but the ground sloped downward from the road, Avenue D, all the way to the channel that ran 4 miles to the north. This gave a natural advantage to the residents, allowing them to shoot over the fence and into the attackers. The worst attack came from the south where the attackers were on level ground. That one had forced them to call for a Kiowa to help direct their fire. In the end

the results were still the same, but they had more wounded that time and a couple of fatalities.

Once in a great while someone would actually approach the gate on Avenue D and seek admission. This was when they learned that The Village was a little out of the ordinary.

We still generally follow the Constitution of the United States, but there isn't any United States anymore, so we made some changes that suit us, was the beginning of the explanation. In our community everyone is equal and that's a fact, not something that we give lip service to. We have due process, but it's a whole lot quicker and if you're convicted of a crime, the execution takes place immediately. We changed the Bill of Rights a little too. You can practice any religion you want but you can't go around and preach to other people unless they invite you to. We only have one denomination, Christian. Freedom of Speech consists of telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. You can carry any gun you're big enough to haul around, no questions asked, but we ask that you check them at the door at the Community Center. We pretty much dumped the remainder of the Amendments. This community is governed by a group of elders but the whole population gets to vote on anything important. The official language is English and our basic law is the Ten Commandments. You still want to join?

None of the things covered in the initial lecture about the Community were open to discussion. They had resolved things among themselves and found that all Christian churches were about the same once you removed the dogma. And since they were just trying to worship and not spread the Gospel, Evangelical wasn't part of the non-denominational Christian Church. They didn't let anyone in that was sexually aberrant either; the queers could have their own community somewhere else, hopefully a long ways away. More than once one of them had to bite their lip to live by the new rules, but they did it and just moved on.

They kept pouring slabs and installing doublewides whenever they could find some. The Army people over at Ft. Irwin weren't getting paid so they donated some beef and pork and chicken and some of their produce. What remained of the military wasn't very big and they were about ½ civilian anyway. But they always showed up when The Village called so The Village did its part to keep them going. The climate was just about perfect to grow anything one wanted and they grew everything they could find seed for. The Village left others alone and just wanted to be left alone themselves.

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“If someone is going to that much trouble to protect what they have,” Spike said, “Whatever they have must be worth taking.”

“Word is Spike that nobody has been able to take the place,” Scrap pointed out. “I heard they got tanks and cannons and a big grave dug for the next people that try.”

“Urban legends,” Spike responded. “There ain’t no place a determined force can’t take. ‘Sides who’s to say we can’t be a little sneaky?”

“I don’t know ‘bout dat Spike,” Roscoe butted in. “We ain’t had no military training except for Buster and they kicked him outta basic.”

“We got them tanks and they’re bulletproof right?” Spike ignored them. “We got almost a hundred guys. Them broads won’t be no help but sheesh, a hundred guys. I say we take the place out and get all the gold and silver and food.”

“You the man, Scrap said, “But if I gets killed, I’m comin’ back and piss on yo’ grave.”

The group was from greater Los Angeles and they’d seen the residents of The Village from time to time but hadn’t connected the scavengers with the folks up by Quail Lake. They’d seen a lot of TV back in the ‘good old days’ and knew that they had to scout the place out. Spike picked his best men and sent them up I-5 and over to Quail Lake. The men had instructions to spend 2 weeks checking the place out and then report back. They made their way within a thousand yards of the fence and camped out behind a little hill to take notes. The first thing they discovered was that a man was dropped off and climbed into a clump of bushes. Eventually they could make out the outlines of an Abrams tank and marked it on their chart. They somehow managed to miss the dogs.

Every day for the next 2 weeks, they shifted their location about a mile until they had completely circled the ranch. These guys really were Spike’s best and they had spotted all 16 of the tanks and marked them down. They still hadn’t seen the dogs, however. That’s not to say that they hadn’t seen a dog, but all Rottweiler’s pretty much look alike and they mistook the pack of dogs for a single dog that maybe had their scent. If they’d gotten closer, they would have run into the M14’s and HK-416’s and their mission would have been over. There were those funny triangular signs on the fence every few meters that they didn’t understand. The symbol was a square sign bearing a skull and crossbones.

The signs had been Gar-Bear’s bright idea. He’d seen the symbol on the web at one time or another. But, Spike and his pals hadn’t surfed the web very much. And, there hadn’t been any mine warning symbols on the porno sites. So the men made an assumption that the sign was just a message that said Danger-Stay Away. They were almost right. The residents of the ranch had gone to every armory and military post within driving distance and had collected a lot of the M-14, M-16 and M-18 mines. They’d planted a minefield about 300 yards wide in front of the fence and had reseeded with grass. There was no way to know there was a minefield there unless you understood the symbol. But, as a precaution they’d strung 3 strands of barbed wire outside of the minefield. That was a lot of posts and wire, but it mostly kept the wild animals out. Mostly.

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“So whadya see?” Spike asked.

“Man that’s some setup,” Manny said. “Took us the whole 2 weeks just to get around the place. It’s 4 miles north and south and about 3 miles east and west. Must be close to 8,000 acres. They have a barbed wire fence all around the place and a Cyclone fence about 300 yards further back. We spotted 16 tanks spaced 4 to a side and hidden with brush. They have 16 more tanks around the perimeter of the housing area but they were too far off and we couldn’t see what kind they were. They weren’t Abrams, that’s for sure.”

“Maybe they have some of those old M-60 tanks,” Spike said.

“Yeah that must be it,” Manny quickly agreed. “Around dusk they put one person in each of those tanks behind the fence. That poor sap has to spend the whole night there; we never saw them changing the guard. Anyway, the housing area is in the middle and it’s sorta square. It’s built around a big building in the center. There’s a couple of steel buildings off to the east side, but they look to be afterthoughts.”

“How many people are we up against?” Spike asked.

“We saw a lot of kids, but that darned 20 power spotting scope ain’t the best. I tole ya we should have taken the 50 power,” Manny replied. “I suppose maybe 150 altogether counting the kids.”

“What age were the kids?” Spike asked.

“Some little kids and lots of teenagers,” Manny replied. “Everyone we saw was carrying a gun.”

“Shouldn’t let kids play with guns,” Spike said. “Transportation?”

“Saw a bunch of pickups by the houses but they was mostly riding horses,” Manny replied. “There was 3 old farts that made a circuit around the place every single day. Always rode in the mornings except for Sundays when they rode in the afternoon. They wouldn’t be no trouble, they was as old as dirt.”

“Did you test their defenses?” Spike asked.

“You didn’t say so we didn’t,” Manny answered. “They might have a guard dog. We kept seeing the same Rottweiler every night. Maybe he caught our scent.”

“How close did you get to the place?” Spike asked.

“We stayed back, maybe ½ mile,” Manny said.

“Can’t imagine a dog getting your scent from that far off,” Spike mumbled. “So we have as many tanks as they do on the perimeter and a little more. I think we can take them.”

“Nobody else has Spike, I wouldn’t be so sure,” Scrap said.

“Listen to the voice of doom would ya,” Spike said. “We got them out gunned and outnumbered. Piece of cake.”

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“I could get used to riding a horse if I live another 100 years,” Gary chuckled.

“I thought you were going to live forever,” Clarence teased.

“Only have to make it to 80, partner, my dad was 78½ when he died,” Gary replied.

“You didn’t get along with him very well did you?” Ron asked. “I had the same problem.”

“My old man never knocked me around like your old man did you Ronald,” Gary commented. “But he had his own set of expectations for me and I just didn’t live up to be what he wanted. He didn’t approve of Joyce or Sharon but when he died, he left ⅓ of my share of the estate to her and split the other ⅔ between Damon and Derek.”

“That money isn’t worth the paper it’s printed on anymore,” Ron laughed.

“Neither is gold and silver, you can’t eat them,” Gary agreed. “You know fellas I can’t shake the feeling that something big and bad is going to happen.”

“Nobody has successfully attacked this place yet,” Clarence said.

“I don’t really consider those attacks to fall in the same category,” Gary went on. “I mean something more like another big earthquake or something like that.”

“Well bite your tongue, fella, we’ve been through enough,” Ron replied sternly.

What could be worse than what The Three Amigos had already been through? They’d had enough disasters in the last 10 years to last the average guy about 5 lifetimes. There probably wouldn’t be any more of those world wars; there was more than enough usable land for the remaining population of the planet. Everywhere people had learned to become self-dependent or do without. Excluding groups like Spike and his people, of course. It was downright tough in some places. They’d lost the customers for their coffee and vanilla and heroin. In South America they’d had to cut back on the herds of cattle because they couldn’t export their beef to Norteamérica. In Africa they’d quit poaching for Ivory and furs and the herds of wild animals were finally making a comeback.

The occasional contrail in the sky reminded them that they weren't alone in the US or the world. After a while, however, people mostly stopped coming around looking to join the community. The word was out what the expectations of the residents were for anyone who wanted to join and people didn't bother unless they were positive they'd fit in. There was no particular shortage of housing and when one of those groups came calling most of the time they ended staying. It was in this manner that the community had doubled over a period of a couple of years. Oh, yeah, it was now June 1, 2014.

The Unprepared – Chapter 18 – And The Livin' is Easy

...fish are jumping and the cotton is high.

The fishing was pretty good over at Quail Lake because it didn't get fished all that much anymore. Occasionally The Three Amigos would take one of the pickups and drive over and spend some time fishing. They all really enjoyed it because the fish must have been really hungry and practically jumped on the hooks. It didn't matter what they used for a lure because they caught fish. And if I said that Quail Lake Reservoir was in anything other than Los Angeles County, I misspoke myself. If you click on the map link, you can visualize the ranch. The wind turbines run about straight north of where it says Sandburg and the eastern border is about Neenach. It goes almost to the Kern County line from highway 138. Lancaster and Palmdale aren't as big as they show on the map, either. It shows their spheres of influence.

One afternoon in the middle of June, The Three Amigos and Chris were over at the lake fishing. They'd done pretty well and were about to call it a day when a whole string of cars passed the lake. The pickup wasn't visible from the road and they just remained quiet and the cars went right on by.

"Tango Victor One, this is Ron," Ron called back to the Community Center.

"Go ahead Ron," Amy replied.

"Did a big bunch of cars just pass the ranch?" Ron asked.

"Let me check, standby one," Amy replied.

"Ron, this is Amy, nobody came past the main gate, what's up?" Amy responded.

"A string of cars just went by sort of slow and we were thinking they're looking for trouble," Ron explained.

"I'll put us on alert, can you guys get back to the ranch?" Amy asked.

"If you hear gunfire it will probably mean we can't," Ron replied.

They four men were armed, naturally, and they headed back to the ranch cautiously. They didn't pass any cars on the way and after they got to the Community Center and in the Control Room, they shared what they'd seen with the other elders. Bill Wilson was an honorary elder and he suggested calling Ft. Irwin as a precaution. He'd ask the folks at the Fort to fly over their entire fleet of 4 Apache helicopters. (It's peacetime and there isn't any government, you expected maybe 40 choppers?) The elders agreed and Bill got on the radio. Fort Irwin could respond, but it would take 2 hours.

“You say they passed you at Quail Lake and they didn’t come by here,” Derek said. “That must mean that they are either on the west side by the wind turbines or on the south side and further west. I’d suggest that we leave the tanks where they are but put full crews in them so we can use them if we need them. We can concentrate the Paladins to the south and to the west.”

“We can’t run a war by committee, so you and Wilson take charge, unless someone disagrees,” Gary suggested. “I’m going to get me my Springfield and as many of those Chinese PF-97’s as I can carry.”

“Only one?” Ron asked. “Get your pickup and take a bunch. Get me some and I’ll get my rifle.”

“Hey, what about me, don’t I get to go?” Clarence asked.

“Only if you’ve learned to keep the part with you brains down,” Ron laughed.

“I’ll get one of those Chinese SAW’s,” Clarence said departing the room.

They could have had any weapon they wanted because the ranch had been well equipped by the Army with cast-off Chinese firearms and H&Ks. All three of them had swapped out their Loaded M1A’s for those Super Match rifles the Army had provided. Gary loaded about 20 of the FAE rocket launchers in his pickup and tossed in a bag with 30 25-round magazines. Ron had another bag with about the same number of magazines and some of the Chinese hand grenades. Clarence came with the Type 81 SAW and two bags of the 75-round drums. They piled in the pickup and headed to the main gate.

After the incident where Clarence had gotten shot, the folks had put in fighting positions. It hadn’t helped as much as they’d hoped when they were attacked from the south before, but, only 2 of the residents had died and it could have been a lot worse. So far, all of the residents of the old Moon Shadows housing tract were alive. Damon and Clarence had been shot, but they’d healed in time.

“Once it gets dark, they’ll probably attack,” Ron suggested. “Do you think maybe they’ve scouted this place out?”

“Why?” Gary asked, “What difference does it make?”

“All we saw was a bunch of cars but what if they have tanks or something?” Ron asked. “If they’ve scouted the place, they may know where all of our tanks are and if they have TOW rockets or something, they could take the tanks out.”

“Tango Victor One, this is Gary,” Gary called the control center.

“What do you need, Dad?” Amy asked.

“Let me talk to Derek or Sergeant Wilson,” Gary said.

“Standby one,” Amy replied.

“What do you want Dad?” Derek asked over the radio.

“Ron asked what if the bad guys had scouted the ranch and know where our tanks are,” Gary explained.

“I’ll fire them up and have the motors running,” Derek replied, “And we’ll move them just after dark.”

“You’d better move all of them to west and south side, Derek,” Bill Wilson advised. “And load them with Sabot, just in case.”

“Tanks 1 through 16, this is command,” Derek called on the radio. “I want tanks 9 through 12 to move to the west side and tanks 13 through 16 to move to the south side. Tanks 1 through 8 should reposition themselves 300-meters to their right just after dark. Everyone load Sabot. Back out of those brush piles and just leave them sitting in case the enemy has tanks.”

“What is your thinking on that Derek?” Wilson asked.

“If Ron is right and they’ve scouted this location, they may take their first shot at the brush piles,” Derek explained. “That will let the fire controls on the Abrams zero in on their position. And, I’d assume that any infantry they’d have would be close to the tanks so we can saturate the area with airbursts from the Paladins.”

“Now is the hard part,” Wilson observed. “Sitting and waiting for the attack.”

“We can send the Apaches out when they get here,” Derek said. “If the attackers do have tanks, 4 Apaches should be able to handle up to 64 of them.”

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When the Apaches arrived they were directed to make a sweep of the area with their FLIR and scout for infantry and especially any tanks. They made several sweeps, but came up blank. They landed and were refueled and placed on standby. The explanation was simple. By the time the Apaches arrived, the bad guys had taken shelter for themselves and their vehicles and their remaining 22 tanks were chugging up I-5. These weren’t the brightest bulbs in the box and they’d already lost 2 tanks with broken treads. It isn’t that difficult to repair a tread; if you know how and have the parts and necessary equipment. Derek had done it lots of times. Every tank, according to Derek at The Village, carried the parts with them.

You could hear the whine of the turbines in the Abrams tanks because the normal stillness of the ranch had been disturbed. And when they fired up the diesels on the Paladins there was a lot of sound. Eventually, just after dark, they heard the tanks moving and a while later the turbines resumed their 'quiet' whine. The sound wasn't quite loud enough to cover the sound of tank treads they heard later on.

"Tango Victor One, this is Gary," Gary radioed.

"What do you want now Dad?" Derek answered this time.

"Did you move those tanks again?" Gary asked.

"Negative," Derek replied.

"Then you'd better get those Apaches airborne because the 3 of us heard tank treads."

"Roger, what direction?" Derek asked.

"Maybe to the west," Gary replied.

"That's right," Clarence said, "To the west."

"Clarence confirms to the west," Gary radioed.

"Tango Victor One," Derek acknowledged.

A new sound was added to the sounds of the night when the 4 Apaches brought their rotors up to speed.

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"Where are the rest of the tanks?" Spike demanded.

"Two broke treads on I-5 and a 3rd just after we got off the freeway," Manny replied.

"That's ok, Manny, we still have 21, and they only had 16 tanks in the bushes, right?" Spike said.

"That's right boss, 16 tanks all concealed in those piles of bushes," Manny agreed. "But they had those other tanks up by the Village."

"It would take them too long to bring them up," Spike said. "We'll attack them in an hour at midnight."

Can you imagine how brightly an Abrams tanks must glow in the FLIR of an Apache helicopter after that tank has been driven all the way from LA to Lebec? And we all know

about those Hellfire missiles the Apache carries, right? Spike had left LA with 24 tanks; each with a crew of 4 plus 100 infantry troops armed to the teeth with lots of those Chinese PF-97's and other assorted arms. That was then and about 5 minutes later those Apaches lined up on the first of the 21 Abrams. The tanks were sitting ducks and 10 minutes later, Spike was down to zero tanks and about 20 infantry. The M230 guns on the choppers made short shift of the infantry they could see.

"I tole ya," were Scrap's dying words. Spike didn't hear Scrap because his ears had failed to function just after a 30mm round cut him in half.

"Dang it I wanted to get revenge," Clarence shouted.

"We can go over there where the choppers hit and kill the wounded," Ron suggested.

"You drive, I'll shoot," Clarence said.

"I'll guard the ranch," Gary added.

About ½ hour later Ron and Clarence were back and from the smile on Clarence's face, Gary assumed that he'd found at least one guy to shoot. Gary should have gone along. The chopper cut up all of the vehicles and the ones they missed were blocked in by all the debris. Clarence and Ron saved the wounded for last and managed to kill 18 of the 20 survivors before Clarence got to gun down the wounded. This time they just left everything sit; Derek and the others could come back and salvage anything worth taking.

But as I say, Gary didn't ask and neither Ron nor Clarence volunteered any information. The next day, Derek and Bill went to see what, if anything, they could salvage after the Apaches left for Ft. Irwin. Parts were the primary answer, lots and lots of parts. Well, they did manage to get some of the Ma Deuces that hadn't been blown to hell and back and a few boxes of .50 cal BMG ammo, but that was about it. They could hear a tank off in the distance to the west and they scooted out of there and headed back to the ranch to get a Hummer equipped with TOW missiles. When they returned, the tank was parked with the other tanks and the occupants were sorting through the dead. The TOW missiles took care of the tank and their HK-416's took care of the 4 occupants.

"Do you suppose they had more tanks?" Derek asked. "I only count 22 and they usually come in sets of 4."

"We can reload the TOW launcher and get another Hummer from the ranch and go see easy enough," Bill replied.

"Maybe we'd better do that Bill," Derek said. "It wouldn't do to leave a couple of tanks sitting around."

About ten miles down I-5 the 4 men were still trying to figure out how to repair the track when the 3 Hummers showed up. The bad guys grabbed their rifles and opened fire on the hummers and the 3rd Hummer, the one with the Ma Deuce, wiped them out and didn't even damage the tank. Five miles further down the road they ran into a tank that was just being crewed with 2 men in and 2 men out. The Ma Deuce opened up and killed the gunner and tank commander and shortly after the driver and loader climbed out with their hands in the air.

Derek and Bill pumped the 2 guys for information and found out that according to the body count they had only missed killing 2 members of the entire group besides the 2 men standing there. Make that 2 members period, the ones Ron and Clarence had missed. They started up the tank and drove it the 5 miles to the second Abrams and Derek repaired the track. One of the Hummer drivers was also a tank driver so they drove the two Abrams back to the ranch. They never did see the two guys that Ron and Clarence had missed, but they were up to 18 M1A2SEP's. I forgot to mention it, but you've probably guessed. The ranch or The Village had one more rule. Take no prisoners. And they didn't even bother to clean up the bodies because they were far enough from the ranch that they shouldn't pick up any smell. Now had they been into methane production that might have been a different story.

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And still Gary wasn't satisfied that they'd seen the end of it, whatever IT was. He busied himself going through his supplies constantly almost as if he had some sort of obsession. He still took time out to go to church and go riding but every other free minute was spent checking and rechecking. He counted the amount of ammo he had on hand and then eliminated all of the Chinese firearms and made certain that he only had 2 of each thing that he wanted like: M1A's Super Match rifles (suppressed with top of the line sights), Mossberg 590A1 12-gauge shotguns, Winchester 9422's, Winchester 94's (.45 Long Colt), Vaqueros, (.45 Long Colt, 1-7½", 1-4⅝"), Colt M1911's, HK-416s and HK-417s.

For each handgun Gary had 500 rounds of ammunition and for each rifle 5,000 rounds. The 7.62x51mm ammo was all Black Hills match, 80% 175gr BTHP and 20% 175 FMJ. The ammo for the 5.56s was also Black Hills match, ½ 52 grain BTHP and ½ 55 grain soft point. The .45 Long Colt was Winchester 225 grain silvertip hollow point all 11,000 rounds of it (2 rifles & 2 revolvers) and his 12-gauge assortment included 500 rounds each of 3" 15-pellet 00 buck, 3" 41-pellet no 4 buck, and 1⅜-ounce Brenneke slugs plus 250 rounds each of #2, and #6 shot. Finally he had 20 bricks of Winchester Super X 40 grain lead round nose .22 rimfire.

Gary had found a chain saw and a spare chain plus oil and a sharpener. He had a single bit axe, splitting wedges, and a maul. In fact if you stopped and looked at what he was accumulating it almost appeared as if he were putting together a complete 'outfit' almost like he were planning on leaving. The dead giveaway came when he started to round up kerosene heaters, lamps and lanterns. He'd made a trip down to that place in

Acton where they'd gotten all of the horse drawn equipment and come back with the Conestoga Wagon they had sitting there.

"What in the blazes are you up to?" Ron asked. "If I didn't know better, I'd think you were getting ready to bugout and go primitive."

"Why do you think you know better partner, that's exactly what I'm fixing to do," Gary replied.

"Where the hell are you going?" Ron asked.

"I think maybe Oregon," Gary said. "I'd rather go to Vermont but that's 3,000 or more miles and I'd die of old age before I got there."

"Why are you leaving?" Ron asked.

"I want to get away from the rat race, Ron," Gary replied. "There too darn many people here."

"We only have 150 people; that's not many," Ron said.

"Too many for me," Gary responded. "I just about have everything packed. As soon as I get some more food in that wagon, I'll be set to go."

"What's going on?" Clarence asked, walking in on the conversation.

"Gary's lost his mind, partner, he's packing up to go to Oregon using horses and a wagon."

"Gonna take me a cow and a bull plus chickens and hogs," Gary said. "If Sharon wants to come that's fine and if she doesn't I'll go without her. The something big is coming, I can feel it in my bones. I want to be as far away from everywhere as I can be when it comes."

"You want some company Gary?" Clarence asked.

"It would be nice, but I got me a new dog so I won't be lonesome," Gary said.

"I was sure sorry Missy died," Ron said, "How old was she?"

"17 years old Ron, dang I sure miss her," Gary admitted. "But Missy dying made me realize that I'm not getting any younger and I always wanted to go live in the woods, if you know what I mean."

The Unprepared – Chapter 19 – Northward Ho the Wagons

The name of the movie was 'Westward Ho the Wagons' (1956) Disney. The script called for an Indian attack on a wagon train, but producer Walt Disney told second-unit director Yakima Canutt that he didn't want it to be a typical Indian attack, as children would be watching the film and he didn't want them to see anyone killed or injured onscreen. Canutt objected, saying that in real life people were killed during Indian attacks, and an Indian attack where no one gets hurt was so unrealistic that it shouldn't be filmed at all. Disney ordered Canutt to shoot the attack as ordered. After screening the film, however, Disney told Canutt that he had been right and the attack looked too phony and unrealistic. He ordered it to be reshot in a more realistic manner. Canutt said that it would add at least a week and several hundred thousand dollars to the budget, but Disney told him to re-shoot for as long as he needed in order to get it right. You remember Fess Parker, right? He lived over by Santa Barbara and ran a winery.

"You can't split up The Three Amigos, partner," Ron said. "I'm coming too."

"What about Lucy and Linda, fellas," Gary asked.

"They can go or they can stay and console Sharon," Ron laughed. "I need a week to get everything around. But why are you taking a covered wagon? We have some travel trailers and pickups."

"So how do we get propane and diesel and tow horse trailers for the livestock?" Gary asked. "Doing it my way, Sharon could drive the wagon and I could ride Salina and drive the livestock."

"Ron's right, Gary," Clarence said. "That must be 1,000 miles. It would take forever."

"800 miles to where I'm going and it will only take about a month more or less," Gary replied. "We can use I-5 to get up past Grants Pass."

"And it would only take about a day by truck," Ron said. "Hell, man, we can load the livestock on one truck and everything else on a second and third if necessary. Besides my friend, you're a little old to be sleeping on hard ground."

What was it I said about life being a series of compromises? I'm going to end up eating those words. But, Gary agreed and Ron loaded 3 10,000-gallon propane tanks on semis and filled in around them with everything else they'd need. They had a Chevron tanker again; several in fact, and Ron commandeered one of them. Ron and Clarence must have done a number on Linda and Lucy because they had Sharon talked into going. The travel trailers all had small propane generators and stoves and all the comforts of home. I sure hope stabilized #2 diesel burns in a kerosene lamp. The new plan was to move to Oregon and find a place to live. Then those 3 old men were going to build log cabins and live the primitive life. Right, LOL. Ron and Clarence had convinced Linda and Lucy that Gary was just going through another phase. They needed to humor him

they said, they were just too good of friends to let him go off by himself and live like some darn hermit in Oregon. Linda and Lucy used the same line on Sharon and Sharon arranged with Amy, Damon and Derek to keep an eye on their homes. Give it until winter, she assured them, and Gary would be ready to head back to The Village.

They put together quite the caravan, hauling all of those tanks for fuel and water and propane. There was a truck for livestock and the tanker truck and some extra tools that Ron and Clarence had hurriedly rounded up. It ended up taking them 2 weeks to get around, but they told Gary that still left them 2 weeks ahead of his original schedule. And off they went to Oregon and ended up in Salem. Well not quite, Gary decided he liked an area about ½ way between Eugene and Grants Pass, maybe because there was a highway number 138. The name of the nearest town used to be called Roseburg and it used to be called Douglas County.

East on 138 they found an area on the north side of the road with several abandoned houses. They figured this was as good as place as any because a lot of the land wasn't flat like they were used to. They parked the trailers and the crane was used to unload the propane tanks and water tanks and after several hours of unloading the rest of the people headed back to California. There was a well there and Gary fired up one of those propane powered standby generators to power the pump. They had water now to fill the tank and all they needed was to dig a hole and put in the septic tank they hauled along. That, they decided, could wait a day and they fired up the grills and had a cook-out.

Gary had his wish all right; they were practically in the middle of nowhere. All they had to put in the septic system was 3 shovels and that took them the remainder of the week. Then, they had to put in a late garden but they had plants ready to transplant and they sort of went the low till route. Gar-Bear had his heart set on building a log cabin but by the time they got 3 trees cut down a log cabin suddenly seem like too much work. The wood was green and would have to cure until the following summer before they could use it anyway. All of a sudden Gary's dreams to become a pioneer faded as he realized he started 40 years too late.

When he was young enough and strong enough to possibly pull it off, he'd gotten ready to give a shot. That was back in '67. But an accident at work had landed him in the hospital and under the surgeon's knife and by the time he'd healed up that chance at his dream had faded. He'd thought about it nearly every day since '67 but never got up the gumption. And now, in 2014, when he had the gumption that was about all he had. They still had to hook the septic tank up to the homes and he was ready to call it quits.

"I screwed up," Gary admitted.

"You ready to return to the rat race?" Ron asked.

"As much as I hate to admit it, I am," Gary said.

“Get your trailer hooked to your pickup and we’ll leave in a while,” Ron said.

“But how?” Gary asked. “It took a whole bunch of semis to get us here. And we don’t have a radio that will reach 800 miles.”

“Sure we do, let me show you what you can do with a linear amp,” Ron chuckled.

“Tango Victor Two this is the pioneers, come back,” Ron said into his CB mike.

“You ready to leave?” Damon’s voice came over the radio as if he were just down the road.

“That’s a very large 10-4 Damon, see you in 10?” Ron replied.

“Make it 20, I have to round everyone up,” Damon advised.

“I thought they headed back to California,” Gary said, surprised.

“They did, and Roseburg is on the way,” Ron explained. “We talked it over and they agreed to wait 2 weeks in Roseburg just to see if you got this foolishness out of your system.”

It was almost dark by the time they had everything loaded back up. Damon told Ron they’d spend the night in Roseburg and The Three Amigos could join them at sunup for the 800-mile drive back to California. Gary was afraid Sharon would be angry over his foolishness, but if she was it didn’t show. She was too busy laughing while she added more band-aids to his blistered hands and rubbed Mineral Ice into every muscle in his back. At the crack of dawn they were in Roseburg and began the 16-hour journey home.

“This is Ron,” the radio cracked, “How is Daniel Boone doing?”

“Hand me that mike Sharon and I’ll answer that,” Gary said.

“This is Mrs. Boone and his hands are so sore he can hardly steer the pickup,” Sharon chuckled into the mike.

“10-4, we’ll get him a relief driver when we stop in Grants Pass,” Ron laughed back.

“I’ll get him for that,” Gary muttered.

“Gary you should just be extremely grateful that you have as good friends as you do,” Sharon said sharply. “You were so darned determined that a whole lot of people went out of their ways to humor you. We burned up a lot of fuel on this little expedition of yours and the three of you are lucky you didn’t all get heart attacks.”

“It was just a case of too little, too late, Sharon,” Gary responded. “I could have done it back in ‘67.”

“You’ll never know will you?” she commented. That was the dig that he’d been expecting but it didn’t hurt too bad.

At Grants Pass they pulled to a stop just long enough to take on someone to drive Gary’s pickup and they continued on their way. They arrived back at the ranch around 9pm and didn’t bother to unload anything; they were tired and just went to bed. Gary expected a lot of kidding about the misadventure but everyone avoided the subject like the plague. When they’d finally gotten everything put away, The Three Amigos resumed their afternoon rides.

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“So Daniel,” Ron said to Gary, “You got it out of your system?”

“Yes and no,” Gary said. “Now that we’re home I’ve got that feeling back that something big is going to happen.”

Ten years earlier in June of 2004, there was much ado about a small asteroid that had been discovered. Labeled 2004 MN4, the 1,320-foot rock had raised speculation about an impact and that had dropped off. Just before Christmas the same year, CNN had carried an article about the asteroid and the scientists had given the rock a 1 chance in 300 of hitting the earth on April 13, 2029. That could have been what was bothering Gary, but it wasn’t. In 2029, he should live so long, he’d be a really old man of 86. And if God wanted to kill him with a rock like David slew Goliath, so be it.

In their brief absence, some of the other residents had gone to Lancaster and started to dismantle a large greenhouse. The Antelope Valley grew literally tons of onions before it had all gone to hell and the onions were grown from sets. Those sets were started in greenhouses and the farmers didn’t lose many onions because they started with a healthy plant. There had been some discussion among the elders about setting up a greenhouse and doing the same for all of their produce but when they’d left it was still in the planning stage. That most certainly wasn’t the case any longer.

Also back in 2004, Gary had gotten an email from one of the friendly squirrels. The text of the message was simple; the guy shared some information he’d gathered over the years about farming. “Once upon a time, I attended a meeting of the El Centro Kiwanis Club. All of the meetings have some kind of guest speaker and theirs was from a local farming organization called “Blue Jack Farms”. Seems to me that I found them on the web a few years ago right after I attended that meeting.

“The gist of their operation was not to put seeds in the ground as you might expect a farm to do, but rather, they operated a huge, massively big, bunch of greenhouses, if

you will, where they grew crops from seeds in flats like you see at any nursery. They grew these seedlings in layers from floor to ceiling in huge steel buildings and carefully controlled the climate for the first 45 days or so of the plants life and then sold the plants to the farmers to transplant into the fields.

“The way they explained it, if the farmer plants his fields with seeds, almost 30% doesn’t make it to fruition. Bugs, critters, birds, etc., damage of various sorts, diseases. But their method yields nearly a 98% success rate and the best part is that the farmer can get an additional growing season out of his field by trimming that 45-ish day start-up from each of his crops.”

Gary never had found the website, but he stored the information for future use. Then when they were talking about a greenhouse, he shared what he could remember. Apparently, in their absence, the folks at the ranch had decided to go ahead with the project. Joyce’s father had been in charge of the Plant Introduction farm at Iowa State University and Gary was fairly familiar with starting plants in greenhouses because that’s how Herb had started his.

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Maybe an asteroid was going to hit the planet in 2029, but so what? It was a little one that only had the potential of 1,600-mT of energy. And if it hits your house, it didn’t really matter if you had 6” of concrete or 50’ of concrete, now did it? The area of the surface of the earth is about $1015 \times 0.510 \text{ m}^2$ and that asteroid that CNN had been talking about was only 400 m^2 . The odds favored it not landing on your house or anywhere near your house. Feeling lucky? You’re going to win the Lottery a lot of times before that rock hits YOUR house. Anyone know what the blast radius is on a 1,600-mT bomb? They estimated the rock that caused that hole in Arizona was 50-meters across. Don’t worry about it folks, it’s not a linear equation anyway. Eight times bigger in diameter is one hell of a lot times bigger in impact effect. Hold your hand up and stop that rock, God will protect you if you are of strong faith. But wait, God created the Universe and that means He’s responsible for the rock hitting the planet. Blame Him, not me.

CFI calculated the 1,600 Megaton yield. The answer was, “A single yield of this magnitude would change climate for generations. For a large section of the earth there would be no new generations. Attempting to use this model would be meaningless. Fallout covers one hemisphere.”

The Unprepared – Chapter 20 – Laments and More

That was for April 13, 2029. What about future generations? In the movies they show using rockets with nuclear warheads to blow up the comets/meteors/asteroids. Five movies come to mind, *Deep Impact*, *Armageddon*, *Meteor*, *Asteroid* and *Fire in the Sky* where the earth was hit by a rock from space. Naturally each of the rocks devastated the United States to some degree. And rocks have hit the planet with 3 in memory, the Yucatan Peninsula strike that killed the dinosaurs, the strike in Arizona and the rock that exploded over Siberia. If you are young and believe in preparedness, you have until April 13, 2029 to get ready. But remember, it's only a 1 in 300 chance.

That wasn't what was nagging in the back of Gary's mind. He'd watched the programs on Super Volcanoes where they'd talked about Yellowstone erupting but that wasn't due for 100,000 years. That didn't mean that some other volcano might not erupt. Mt. St. Helens and Mt. Rainier had been rumbling again back in 2004. The entire Cascade Range was a series of volcanoes. I'll give you a list starting in Canada and working my way to California. Meager Mountain, Mount Garibaldi, Mount Baker, Glacier Peak, Mount Rainier, Mount Adams, Indian Heaven Volcanic Field, Mount St. Helens, Mount Hood, Mount Jefferson, Three-Fingered Jack, Mount Washington, Belknap Shield Volcano, Three Sisters, Broken Top, Mount Bachelor, Newberry Caldera, Lave Butte and Pilot Butte, Diamond Peak, Mount Bailey, Mount Thielsen, Crater Lake, Mount McLoughlin, Medicine Lake, Black Butte, Mount Shasta and Lassen Peak. But wait, there's more: Clear Lake, Long Valley-Mammoth, Coso, Amboy Crater and Salton Buttes.

Now, ask yourself, are those volcanoes really extinct? If they are, why did the Internet say some of them are active? And, unless you're very close to the volcano, how do you distinguish its rumblings from those of an earthquake? How far is it from Long Valley and Mammoth to the western Antelope Valley? It was 285 miles by road, and a lot less as the crow flies. And what about Roseburg where old Gar-Bear had tried to pioneer? It was about 40 miles from Crater Lake, the dummy!

Gary was somewhat embarrassed over his gaff but he couldn't undo it so he said to hell with it and just went on like nothing had happened. One of the problems they had these days was that you couldn't turn on the TV or go to the USGS website and find out where that recent quaking had come from. How had people ever gotten along without modern technology? Pretty dang well, actually. Before there were cars and pickups there were trains and before the trains were the stagecoaches. The telegraph was pretty much replaced by the telephone. Morse built his first experimental telegraph in 1835, a year before the Alamo. The first line was from Washington to Baltimore in 1844. The phone came along in 1875 although no one agreed who invented it until when in September 2001 Meucci was officially credited by the US Congress with the invention of the telephone, instead of Alexander Graham Bell.

Gary had seen his first TV in 1951-2 at the home of his mother's former boss in Charles City, Iowa. Before that he had listened to an old vacuum tube radio that was as big as

one of the small office refrigerators. Gary had his first computer for about 4 hours in 1982 and bought a real one, an Apple clone in 1983 and sat up at night keeping Sharon awake learning how to use Word Star and Magicalc. Had it really been 30 years since they invented the personal computer? The thing about it is that if you can run one of those programs and have ½ a brain, you can run most of them, especially the consumer programs they came out with like Lotus 1-2-3 and Microsoft Word. Excel is about the same thing as 1-2-3 and a couple of day's transition from one to another is a snap.

Old Gar-Bear's history was Magicalc-Lotus-Excel and Word Star-Ami Pro-Word. He'd even taught himself dBase III and written a dBase application compiled by the Clipper Compiler. But those were the 'good old days'. Then he caught the Internet bug in about 1995 and the rest was, as they say, 'history'. He taught himself to find about anything he wanted on the Internet. Why guess when you could look it up? That all ended when everyone got sick and died. First some of the IP's went down and then more and finally the phones. And he'd never had anything more than DSL and now all those computers were nothing more than electronic storage boxes. And when the paper and inkjet cartridges and the laser toner cartridges ran out it would be only a visual medium.

So how do you know if it was an earthquake or seismic activity related to a volcano eruption? Hell, I don't know, but if you do, send me an email and I'll share your information. You might try looking at the sky for a large cloud of dust rising anywhere from 20,000 to 40,000 feet. If you see a fast moving cloud of dust moving towards you at express train speed, that could be a pyroclastic flow. At night you could still see the cloud, it was a fiery red color. Most of us can remember Mt. St. Helens blowing its lid on May 18, 1980. If you really paid attention to that eruption it was triggered by another natural disaster we sometimes face, a landslide.

The 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens (VEI = 5, 1.2 km³ of material erupted) is the most significant volcanic eruption to occur in the lower 48 US states in recorded history, exceeding the destructive power and volume of material released by the 1915 eruption of California's Lassen Peak (the 1912 eruption of Novarupta in Alaska was the most powerful historic eruption in the US). The eruption was preceded by a two-month long series of earthquakes and steam venting episodes that created a huge bulge and a fracture system on Mount St. Helens' North Slope. An earthquake on May 18, 1980, caused the entire weakened north face to slide away, suddenly exposing the partly molten, gas- and steam-rich rock in the volcano to lower pressure. The rock responded by exploding into a super-heated mix of pulverized lava and older rock that sped toward Spirit Lake so fast that it quickly passed the avalanching north face.

A volcanic ash column rose 12 miles high into the atmosphere and deposited ash in eleven US States. At the same time, snow, ice, and several entire glaciers on the mountain melted, forming a series of large lahars (volcanic mudslides) that reached as far as the Columbia River. Less severe outbursts continued into the next day only to be followed by other large but not as destructive eruptions later in 1980. By the time the ash settled, 57 people (including innkeeper Harry Truman and geologist David A. Johnston) and thousands of animals were dead, hundreds of square miles (mi²) reduced to waste-

land, over a billion US dollars in damage had occurred, and the once graceful face of Mount St. Helens was scarred with a huge crater open to the north.

Old Gar-Bear had all of those useless links on his computer, but they really told a story. Tsunamis, Volcanoes, Tornados, Hurricanes, Earthquakes and Large Fires constantly ravaged the country and the world. And, just because a lot of people got sick and died didn't mean that nature stopped its rampages. The fires were a natural occurrence and when people stopped putting them out, they took care of themselves, burning off the accumulated underbrush and thinning the forests just like God intended. And though the earth was 4 billion years old, according to the scientists, it was a young planet and still had its molten core.

People, in the US, for the past 300+ years had encroached on the natural scheme of things and now it was nature's turn to set everything right. Obviously the Creationists tried to explain how everything came to be and just as obviously, they had the time line wrong. The planet was much older than mankind and that doesn't take anything away from God. Nobody disputes he did it, but let's get practical. He'd followed his schedule, not the schedule they came up with for the Bible. But instead of resolving the differences, man had relied on dogma and had insisted that it could only be the way they described it.

It all seemed so petty to The Three Amigos considering all that they had been through. But in their 80's they'd seen their share of life and the good times and bad. They'd seen all of those natural disasters either in person or on TV. And now in the prime of their lives were content to ride the horses around the ranch and simply keep an eye on things. Spike and his crowd had been the last attack, until the next one, and they made a pact to try and outlive George Burns.

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As far as the primitive life goes, as they began to use up some of their technology, yes it wears out; Gary was getting more than he bargained for. The propane was the first thing to go. It hadn't run out, but they needed to save what they had to run the generators. So, off they went looking for electric stoves and furnaces and hot water heaters. Made more sense anyway with the electricity being free. And if any of those 15 wind turbines wore out, there were several thousand more on the other side of the mountain. Diesel fuel wasn't in short supply, however. There were millions of gallons to recover and stabilize. Stabilizer was getting a little scarce, but there was still enough of that for the foreseeable future. On the other hand, nobody strayed far from the ranch except for the rare salvage operations. They had almost everything they needed.

I say almost everything because in the 21st century there had been all of those medical advances and all of those neat pills that kept you alive beyond your time. Except that there weren't any companies manufacturing pills anymore. Good thing they got those books on homeopathic medicine. An herb garden provided most of what they needed and insulin had an almost indefinite shelf life until it was opened. And for those few folks

that they couldn't treat for want of a drug, they got to go home early. But in 2014 they knew about eating a proper diet and getting lots of exercise so their bodies seemed to last a little longer. You more likely to get bitten by a Mojave or Southern Pacific rattlesnake than anything else. And, what were the odds of that?

The Southern Pacific rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis helleri*) had 2 venoms, yellow and white. The white and yellow venoms were neutralized differently by two antivenoms (CroFab and Antivipmyn) and four animal sera that contain metalloproteinase inhibitors (*Didelphis virginiana*, *Neotoma micropus*, *Sigmodon hispidus*, and *Spermophilus mexicanus*). Wait, before you run out and buy antivenin, CroFab requires USDA and FDA permits to purchase and you will need a minimum of 10 vials at \$750 per vial. On Venom ER (Animal Planet), they gave some guy 58 vials of CroFab. I hope he had insurance, 58 vials was a world record (\$43,500 for the antivenin alone). The snake? A Southern Pacific rattlesnake and they only get up to 40" long.

There were 3 things to reckon with, volcanoes and rattlesnakes plus maybe an asteroid in the distant future. But if you'd had the time to visit the links, you might have learned that not every asteroid was discovered before it hit. And in a post-plague world, there weren't too many people looking at the sky searching for asteroids. It would have had to be pretty big for anyone to notice anyway. As it happened, this rock was fairly little and it almost burned up in the atmosphere. Almost. It was a hunk of nickel-iron about 25-yards across when it hit the upper reaches of the Thermosphere. It was maybe 1% smaller when it arrived at the Mesosphere and another 1%-2% smaller still at the Stratosphere. And the further it descended into the atmosphere, the brighter it burned. At nine miles altitude, it encountered the Troposphere, generating multiple sonic booms and continued to shrink. But, it was nickel-iron and that only melts, it doesn't really burn. It looked like a shooting star that came to the ground, maybe because it did.

"My God, we had another earthquake," Gary remarked to Clarence and Ron.

Boom-Boom!!!

"Earthquakes don't give off sonic booms, do they?" Clarence asked. "That sounded more like the space shuttle, but they haven't flown those in years."

"Hey fellas, come look, a meteor landed over to the east," Derek sounded excited.

"Did it glide in for a regular approach like the shuttle?" Clarence asked.

"Huh?" Derek mumbled.

"We heard a sonic boom, was that the meteor?" Ron explained.

About that time an announcement came over the PA system directing everyone to take cover in the shelter. The Three Amigos ran for their wives in case they hadn't heard but they were coming in the door. On impact the asteroid, it wasn't a meteor, had ejected a

lot of vaporized soil and iron into the air and it looked almost like a pyroclastic flow. Entering the atmosphere had only caused the 25-yard rock to lose about 5% of its mass. But, you'd have thought that a fifty-megaton bomb had gone off when it hit. It had to be 60-70 miles away, maybe in the Victorville or Apple Valley area, but with no previous experience to compare it to, they just took cover.

It was just as well that they did, small fragments peppered an area for maybe a 60-mile radius around the strike. When the closed circuit TV revealed that the fall of glowing rocks subsided, some of the brave ones ventured out for a look. Of course it happened to be pitch dark and they couldn't see any more than a distant glow, but this called for an investigation first thing in the morning. The sound of a sonic boom depends largely on the distance between the observer and whatever's producing the sonic boom. A sonic boom is usually heard as a deep double "boom" as the aircraft is usually some distance away. However, as those who have witnessed landings of space shuttles have heard, when the aircraft is nearby the sonic boom is a sharper "bang" or "crack".

"You guys go without me," Gary suggested.

"Just strap on those fancy Vaqueros of yours and get a coat," Ron said. "I'm not listening to any of this you're not going crap. That rock had to be big enough to leave a hole."

Gary wore the Vaqueros in what was called the "Laredoan Crossdraw" rig but being an old man, it was almost too much to carry. Of course he had his Winchester. These days he never went anywhere without his holsters and rifle. Gary had managed to cut his weight to 150 pounds but he still had a Buddha belly and no hips to support the holsters. He had always tugged at his pants to keep them up even when he wore a belt. Suspenders had solved that problem with his pants but he could barely keep that double rig on. Sharon suggested that he wear suspenders to keep his gun belt up but you had to draw the line somewhere.

The hole was a few hundred feet across and deep, although they couldn't really tell how deep because it was still hot and they couldn't get close enough. That danged rock had wiped out the Roy Rogers Museum in Victorville. At least that's what someone said. For sure I-15 wasn't going to be used anytime soon without a detour. The Museum had moved to Branson, Mo back in 2003, but the building that had housed it must have been hit near dead center. It had been an Old West style cavalry fort that had housed the Roy Rogers and Dale Evans Museum, according to folks who had seen it. Gary picked up a piece of rock that was still warm to the touch. It appeared to be a piece of the asteroid and was about 8" across.

"What do you have there, partner?" Ron asked.

"I think it's a chunk of that rock, Ronald, "How would you and Clarence like to have a real Bowie knife?"

Legend had it that blacksmith James Black crafted the first Bowie knife from a meteorite. That must have been what Gary was thinking of when he asked the question. Since no one had seen the actual knife since the battle of the Alamo, it was all speculation. And whether or not that nickel-iron rock would make a good knife or even 3 was just further speculation. Black had a secret tempering process that he had intended to pass on but, like Gary, when it came time to do so he couldn't remember anything except the tempering process had 10-steps.

On the way back to the ranch, they started to visit about how close that rock had really come. The earth rotates a little over 1,000 mph and the rock had only struck about 70 miles away. If the rock had struck about 4 minutes later and a little higher on the earth, it would have taken out the ranch. About the time they hit Palmdale, the trucks started to rock and roll.

"Earthquake," Clarence shouted.

They screeched to a halt and waited it out and then continued on their way. About the time they hit Lancaster, 15 minutes later, they felt a second, bigger earthquake.

"I thought we weren't due for another big earthquake for over 100 years," Gary said.

"Maybe that rock hitting Victorville shook something loose," Ron replied.

They were about ½ way between the place where they'd been struck by the 2nd earthquake when they experienced a 3rd and slightly larger quake. They just shook their heads and waited for the shaking to subside before they continued to the ranch.

"What are they doing here?" Clarence asked pointing to the Hummers and 5-ton trucks bearing Army markings.

"I guess we'll have to ask," Ron replied.

"Hey Derek, what is the Army doing here?" Ron shouted.

"The last of their choppers are grounded for lack of parts and they shut down Ft. Irwin and came over here after that meteor hit last night," Derek explained. "They told me they had seismographs and that the ground had been sending our tremors ever since the strike. They showed up about a half-hour after you all left."

"Did you assign them houses?" Gary asked.

"Yes, and they're set, Dad," Derek replied. "They brought one of those seismic sensors and installed it in the ground. It's pretty rough, but they had one bearing from Ft. Irwin and a second from here. They say the lines triangulate around Mammoth Lake."

“Crap, that’s not all that far from here,” Gary added. “I think it’s less than 300 miles by air.”

“The Captain seems to think we’re building up to something, possibly a volcanic eruption,” Derek explained.

“That’s number 6,” Gary said very confidently.

“What, a volcanic eruption?” Clarence wanted to know.

“I told you fellas for some time that something was going to happen,” Gary smiled. “I think that region that you mentioned is the Long Valley Caldera.”

Long Valley Caldera a 15- by 30-km oval-shaped depression located 20 km south of Mono Lake along the east side of the Sierra Nevada in east-central California. This area of eastern California has produced numerous volcanic eruptions over the past 3 million years, including the massive caldera-forming eruption 760,000 years ago. The most recent eruption occurred just 250 years ago in Mono Lake at the north end of Mono-Inyo Craters volcanic chain.

In May of 1980, a strong earthquake swarm that included four magnitude 6 earthquakes struck the southern margin of Long Valley Caldera associated with a 25-cm, dome-shaped uplift of the caldera floor. These events marked the onset of the latest period of caldera unrest that continues to this day. This ongoing unrest includes recurring earthquake swarms and continued dome-shaped uplift of the central section of the caldera (the resurgent dome) accompanied by changes in thermal springs and gas emissions.

Records suggest that on an annual basis winds in the area blow toward an east or northeasterly sector more than 50 percent of the time, and toward some easterly direction more than 80 percent of the time. Obviously they blew in other direction the remainder of the time. They were blowing to the south-southwest when caldera finally blew its top.

Authors Notes: Maybe I got it all wrong - MOSCOW, Russia (AP) -- The Russian military successfully test-fired a mobile version of its top-of-the-line Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missile on Friday (12/24/04), officials said. But that can’t be right; the Russian military is defunct, right? Yeah, right. By the way, snakes fascinate and frighten me.

The Unprepared – Chapter 21 – The Things You Don't Know About

...can kill you.

So can many of the things that you do know about. Not one of the five emergencies they'd had going back to January 17, 2005 had prepared them for an asteroid strike setting off a volcano. Basically it had been easy to survive the earthquake, the house hadn't fallen on them. Surviving the radiation hadn't been so easy either time, but the amigos had underground shelter and that was everything. The President should have been able to predict the Chinese invasion but he was too timid to send a real strong message in the form of a nuclear bomb. That had opened the floodgate to the epidemic. Who in their right mind would build a reactor on an earthquake fault in the first place and they built on a couple of faults. Then again just about the whole state of California was an earthquake fault so where could they have gone? Bush had set up the Department of Homeland Security after 9/11 to prevent just the type of event that those terrorists had pulled off. That's what you got when politicians ran things instead of the military.

But in their infinite wisdom the founders of the country had made the military accountable to civilians and the hands of the military were tied. And the military had been allowed to get too small, because of a 'Peace Dividend'. But the military had fought the Chinese to a standstill and eventually won the war. Or, was that won the battle, but lost the war, it seemed that everyone lost after that virus began to spread. California seemed to be a magnet. It attracted everything good and bad. Once a small state in population, the population had exceeded 10% of the national population before TSHTF. The military had stuck around for as long as they could, but with no industry and no national government, it was fated to eventual demise.

The most active area in the entire United States from a seismic and volcanic point of view was the west coast of the country. The Cascade Range was the most active, but many of the California volcanoes (Southern Cascade Range) would rumble from time to time. All it had taken was a strike by a little asteroid to trigger the release of the trapped magma that had been building for years beneath the Long Valley Caldera. Level 1: Minor eruption; Level 2: Moderate explosive eruption; Level 3: Strong explosive eruption; and, Level 4: Massive explosive eruption. Massive eruptions of the size that accompanied formation of Long Valley Caldera 760,000 years ago are extremely rare (none have occurred during the period of written human history). Scientists saw no evidence that an eruption of such catastrophic proportions might be brewing beneath Long Valley Caldera.

When gas-rich rhyolitic magma (the type that has produced most of the Mono-Inyo eruptions) reaches the surface, strong violent explosive eruptions typically occur. The explosive activity blasts apart the magma into small fragments called tephra (pumice and volcanic ash), which may rise to more than 10 km (30,000 feet) above the vent. The tephra may drift tens to hundreds of kilometers downwind. With increasing distance from the vent, tephra that falls to the ground will generally become smaller in size and form a thinner layer. Modest accumulations of tephra pose no immediate threat to life or

property (especially in areas where most structures are built to withstand substantial snow loads), but even a thin dusting of fine ash can seriously disrupt social and economic activities for weeks or months after an eruption.

The good news was The Three Amigos didn't need to worry about disrupting any social activities and the bad news was that the wind was in the wrong direction. Winds had carried the ash from the Mount St. Helens eruption as far as Colorado and Oklahoma. According to the show on Super Volcanoes, if Yellowstone erupted it would be 1,000 times worse than Mount St. Helens. Mount St. Helens was a 5 on a scale of 8 with the number expressing the exponent of the number 10. A Super Volcano would be an 8, the Long Valley Caldera was only a 6, or 10 times as powerful as Mount St. Helens. And, like I said, the wind was blowing the wrong way; it was out of the north-northeast and blowing south-southwest.

Thoughts of converting that meteorite into a trio of knives were set aside as the residents of the ranch tried to cope with the fine dust being carried south from the Long Valley Caldera. The further one was from the volcano, the finer the dust. They really didn't need to use the shelter, but everyone gathered in the community center and they sealed it up tight to keep out the dust. Volcanic ash consists of rock, mineral, and volcanic glass fragments smaller than 2 mm (0.1 inch) in diameter, which is slightly larger than the size of a pinhead. Volcanic ash is not the same as the soft fluffy ash that results from burning wood, leaves, or paper. It is hard, does not dissolve in water, and can be extremely small – ash particles less than 0.025 mm (0.001 inches) in diameter are common. Ash is extremely abrasive, similar to finely crushed window glass, mildly corrosive, and electrically conductive, especially when wet.

The larger the ash particle the closer it falls to the volcano. But the smaller pieces of ash can be carried long distances. When Mount St. Helens erupted in 1980, ash fields as deep as 2-5" were found in Ritzville, WA far east of the volcano and ash fields from ½" to 2" deep all the way to Montana. The actual distance from the community of Mammoth Lakes, CA to Lebec, CA is 192 miles (309 km) (167 nautical miles), as the crow flies.

The size of a volcanic eruption is quantified using a scale called the Volcanic Explosivity Index (VEI), which takes into account the volume of material erupted, the height of the eruption cloud, the duration of the main eruptive phase, and other parameters to assign a number from 0 to 8 on a linear scale. For example, the 18 May 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, which destroyed 632 km² of land, expelled 1.4 km³ of magma, and produced an eruption column that rose to 24 km, was assigned a VEI of 5. On the other hand, the last large eruption from the Yellowstone Caldera, which occurred 600,000 years ago and expelled over 1000 km³ of magma, would be assigned a VEI of 7. However, the vast majority of volcanic eruptions have VEIs from 0 to 2. The TV show *Old Man* had seen on the Super Volcanoes suggested that if Yellowstone ever erupted, it would be an 8.

Volcanoes produce large quantities of gases, mostly water (H₂O), but also significant amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂), hydrogen sulphide (H₂S), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), and

hydrofluoric acid (HF) as well as some chlorine (Cl) and nitrogen (N) compounds. Each of these gases has caused loss of life and damage. Sulphur dioxide vented from the Laki volcano in Iceland in 1783 damaged crops and killed livestock and people. Survivors faced starvation and many more died as a result. Sulphur dioxide causes other problems as well. Exposure to this gas can lead to more numerous incidents of acute asthma and bronchitis. When SO_2 reacts with water in the atmosphere, it forms sulphuric acid and acid rain. Acid rain formed from volcanic clouds can damage crops and, in Hawaii, the increased acidity of water collected in cisterns leaches heavy metals into drinking water. The long-term health effects of this problem are not completely known. In Iceland, fluorine killed and disfigured livestock after the 1845 and 1970 Hekla eruptions. When CO_2 gas, which is heavier than air, is released by a volcano, it collects in low areas; concentrations can become high enough to be deadly. The only known fatalities at a Canadian volcano are reported to have been from poisonous gases during the eruption of the Tseax cone.

Let me see if I have this right, a 25-yard asteroid hit Victorville, CA and caused the Long Valley Caldera to erupt. The wind was not in its usual direction from the west, and it carried a volcanic ash cloud from the Long Valley caldera to the Antelope Valley, about 200 miles away as the crow flies. The eruption was 10 times bigger than the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens. And, although I didn't mention it earlier, the eruption triggered smaller earthquakes along the San Andreas Fault. The eruption produced a lot of gas causing an acid rain of immense proportions. Yeah, that about sums it up. You can forget about the earlier earthquake and the radiation leaks, this was a real natural catastrophe.

The online encyclopedia has a table of the VEI index and a link to the Long Valley caldera. The original explosion of the Long Valley Caldera was a 7 on the VEI scale and it deposited ash, called the Bishop ash beds, over several states including California, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. In the 1980's the USGS established a station at the Long Valley Caldera. I wonder how many people in California knew about that. The Three Amigos didn't. (But we do now.)

Now if you happened to live in an area like eastern Nevada and the Long Valley Caldera blew its top at a 6 or a 7, you were going to get dusted pretty dang good. And it would just be one of those natural disasters you hadn't prepared for. The pyroclastic flow wouldn't reach you in all likelihood, and your Glock wouldn't threaten the ash very much, but if you were a squirrel and were prepared, you no doubt had a shelter that you could retreat to until the ash and the acid rains stopped falling. And forget about that garden for a year or two, you're going to need that stored up food. You'll have no problem in Spring Creek; the distance from the Long Valley caldera is 281 miles (452 km) (244 nautical miles) as the crow flies and the heading from there to Spring Creek is 39.3° (northeast). Aren't you glad you moved out of California? Got some bad news for you, if you survived the pandemic, California is coming to you.

Right after the wind changes, that is. Wind strength is dependent upon the pressure field and is highest when pressure differences are the greatest. For example, a deepening low-pressure system advancing across the mid-latitudes in winter will usually generate strong winds in advance. The lower the pressure, the greater the likelihood of gale force winds. In the Northern Hemisphere winds blow inward and counterclockwise about a low-pressure center. Winds associated with a high-pressure system blow slightly outward from the center and in a clockwise fashion. A Dutch meteorologist named Buys Ballot formulated a technique in 1857 to determine the location of pressure centers. With your back to the wind, pressure to your left is lower. In the Southern Hemisphere, the opposite is true. Of course a high-pressure area will come in after the low and those folks down in Lebec will stop getting the ash and the rain when the wind changes back to its normal flow. "Records suggested that on an annual basis winds in the area blow toward an east or northeasterly sector more than 50 percent of the time, and toward some easterly direction more than 80 percent of the time."

"It looks to me like the ash has stopped falling," Ron announced, "It should be okay for us to go outside now."

"Maybe we'd better wear some of those N-95 masks, partner," Gary suggested. "That dust can be pretty fine and I don't want to add to my COPD."

"Sure, whatever," Ron agreed. "Come on Clarence, let's saddle up the horses and go for a ride."

"Wait for me," Gary said. "I've got suspenders for my gun belt now and it takes a long time to strap it on."

"Why did you pick up that rock at Victorville?" Ron asked. "You said something about Bowie knives?"

"I talked to Chris and it just isn't possible to convert that meteorite into bars of steel with our equipment so I guess we'll just have to stick with the knives we have," Gary replied.

"Where did you find those knives, anyway?" Clarence asked.

"Over in Ventura," Gary replied. "They were made by a company named Cold Steel. I got us those 24" Latin machetes, the tomahawks, walking sticks and the Military Classic knives."

"Did you get the boot knives there too?" Clarence asked.

"They call those daggers the Peacekeeper, Clarence," Gary replied. "They even have those Gurkha knives. I have a whole assortment in my house, if you want something different, let me know."

"Get those when we were out looting?" Ron asked.

“It wasn’t looting, Ronald; it was a reallocation of assets,” Gary reiterated. “By the way, the switchblades came from Santa Fe Springs. Company called Protech Knives. Ironic isn’t it, switchblades were illegal, especially in California and yet one of the best switchblades made was made in California. I had one website where you could buy every kind of knife, 1SKS, if I can recall.”

The Three Amigos had all sorts of ‘play pretties’, from Japanese swords to switchblade knives. They were regular walking armories of tactical gear. They didn’t carry much of it; they’d have needed a cart. On the other hand, they had whatever the situation called for. The volcanic ash was pretty thick on the ranch, ranging in depth from 2 to 5”. That would take care of any crop for this year, for sure.

“How are we going to get rid of all this ash?” Clarence wanted to know.

“I expect we’ll just grade it down to the aqueduct and fill it in,” Gary surmised. “We can supervise, if you want.”

“Naw, we’d just be in the way,” Ron blurted out. “They don’t seem to pay much attention to us older folks anyway.”

That was a problem with society that hadn’t changed a whole lot. Young people thought they had all of the answers and were reluctant to consult with the older people who had already done it every wrong way possible and finally figured out how something should be done. And The Three Amigos were from that era that began during WW II. They had missed the great depression and all that had come before so the only thing they really knew about the ‘primitive life’ came from movies. Almost. Gary could remember a wood stove and kerosene lamps and no electricity from the late ‘40’s but he was barely 5 years old when they’d moved to ‘the big farm’. The big farm had indoor plumbing, running water and electricity. His grandfather had auctioned off the Belgian draft horses right after they’d moved to the farm. Clarence had a similar experience but it had lasted a little longer because he was a little older.

There were probably darn few people around the country that could farm with a team of horses. But, I’ll bet they were learning. As a young man growing up in Charles City, there was still a harness shop in town but it had closed before Gary had gotten into High School. It was trial and error as they learned to harness the teams to pull the wagons. What diesel fuel they had was reserved for the pickups and tractors and the tractors were only used for the jobs that the horses couldn’t do efficiently. It was simple enough to change the tongue on a modern wagon so that horses could pull it and with the pneumatic tires, their job was easier. All of this was a learning process because someday there would be no more diesel fuel to salvage.

With that in mind, they looked into producing biodiesel fuel for their vehicles. Gary had a few articles from Journey to Forever, the biodiesel website on his computer. One thing Gar-Bear had on the computer was the oil yield from various oil seeds: Castor Seed 36

kg; Copra 62 kg; Cotton Seed 13 kg; Groundnut Kernel 42 kg; Mustard 35 kg; Palm Kernel 36 kg; Palm Fruit 20 kg; Rapeseed 37 kg; Sesame 50 kg; Soybean 14 kg; and, Sunflower 32 kg. A company named Biodiesel Industries had a test site at Port Hueneme Naval Base.

“We don’t need to reinvent the wheel fellas, we can borrow that biodiesel plant from Port Hueneme if it is small enough,” Gary suggested. “And if it’s not, we can leave it sit and haul the old oil to it for processing.”

“Where we going to get old oil?” Clarence asked.

“How many thousand fast food joints are there in LA, Clarence?” Gary chuckled. “We can start with their old cooking oils and go from there.”

“You know how to run one of those plants, partner?” Ron asked.

“No, but I can read, Ronald, I assume they’ll have operating manuals,” Gary said. “And if that’s too big of a bite to chew, we’ll build our own plant from the plans on my computer.”

“What all do you have on that computer?” Ron asked and before Gar-Bear could answer, continued with, “Do you have it all backed up?”

“I copied the source code from web pages into doc files and saved them as html files wherever possible,” Gary replied. “Couldn’t get all of the images, but I got the text. But I have a fair number and yes, it’s all backed up.”

“If we could get some of those kids to listen to us we’d never run out of fuel,” Clarence surmised.

“Derek listens, and that’s enough for me,” Gary explained. “He’s younger and most everybody listens to him. So, I plant the seed and let him grow it.”

The acid rain wasn’t too big of a problem and was remedied with an application of agricultural lime. After the volcanic ash had been graded off a layer of lime was added and all of the soil turned. They figured that the remaining volcanic ash might enrich the soil a little and if they could get the pH about right, they could grow crops the following year.

“Is it just my eyes or is the sun dimmer?” Ron asked one day on a ride.

“You know massive volcanic eruptions put a lot of crap in the air Ron,” Gary replied. “I seem to recall reading somewhere that some volcanic eruptions caused crop failures. But, it is like anything else, the ash will settle out of the air in time. It’s not like we don’t have about 2 years’ worth of food stored up, so I don’t think we’ll have to worry too much.”

“I wasn’t so much worried about us as the folks who don’t have a lot of food stored, partner,” Ron reacted. “At what point are they going to run out of food and come looking?”

“I hadn’t thought about that either, Ron,” Clarence added. “Do you think we’ll have trouble?”

“I suppose that all depends on how long the sun stays dimmed and how much food the other people have stored up,” Ron answered Clarence. “But, I’ll tell you it seems a whole lot cooler than normal.”

“That’s to be expected Ronald,” Gary suggested. “The ash in the air is blocking the sunlight and you’d expect it to be cooler with less sunlight.”

“You don’t suppose this is one of those climate change things, do you?” Clarence asked Gary.

“How should I know, Clarence, but I really doubt it,” Gary replied. “On the other hand, when Indonesia’s Tambora erupted in 1815, it produced enough climate cooling to cause many New Englanders to move to the Ohio River Valley. They had not been able to grow crops for two years in New England and were concerned about their future.”

On the subject of Krakatau, Gary referred to something he’d read somewhere. “Bearing in mind that the eruption [that produced the catastrophe] had to have occurred in the southern tropics, the area pinpointed by the Chinese account [of a blast heard thousands of miles away to the southwest of China] narrows the field to the southern Sumatra/western Java part of the Samoa-Sumatra volcanic chain.

“Significantly, there is only one known caldera of appropriate size and vintage in that relatively small (six-hundred-mile-long) area. It surrounds the site of no less notorious a volcano than Krakatoa, the island mountain that brought death and destruction to Java and Sumatra in the 1880s. Could an earlier, bigger eruption of Krakatoa have been responsible for the catastrophe that tormented the world in the mid-sixth century AD and changed its history forever?

“Here the evidence takes a fascinating turn. For buried deep in a little known and normally ignored Indonesian chronicle is an extraordinary passage that may well describe the 535 super eruption itself.

“Describing a huge volcanic event in the Sunda Straits area (between Sumatra and Java), where Krakatoa is located, the chronicle says that a ‘mighty roar of thunder’ came out of a local mountain (Mount Batuwara, now called Pulosari). ‘There was a furious shaking of the earth, total darkness, thunder and lightning.’ ‘Then came forth a furious gale together with torrential rain and a deadly storm darkened the entire world.’

“The chronicle - known as the Pustaka Raja Purwa, or The Book of Ancient Kings, goes on to state that ‘a great flood then came from Mount Batuwara and flowed eastwards to Mount Kamula (now called Mount Gede).’ It then claims that the eruption was so massive that large areas of land sank below sea level, creating the straits that currently separate Sumatra and Java.

“Claiming to describe the dramatic course of events, the chronicle says that ‘when the waters subsided it could be seen that the island of Java had been split in two, thus creating the island of Sumatra.’”

“So, I suppose we could have a brief climate change, but it shouldn’t last too long,” Gary concluded.

The Unprepared – Chapter 22 – Epilog – Everything is Relative

“So, I suppose we could have a brief climate change, but it shouldn’t last too long,” Gary concluded.

‘Brief’ and ‘too long’ were relative terms. When Krakatau had blown its top in 1883, the effects lasted for over 2 years. When it had blown its top in 535, it caused a period of ‘dark ages’ that lasted over 5 years. Say, wasn’t there an undersea earthquake of 9.0 magnitude near Sumatra back around December 26, 2004? Let’s think about this. Krakatau volcano lies in the Sunda strait between the islands of Java and Sumatra. In about 416 AD, Caldera collapse destroyed the volcano and formed a 4-mile (7-km) wide Caldera. The islands of Krakatau, Verlaten, and Lang are remnants of this volcano. The eruption and collapse of the caldera in 1883 produced one of the largest explosions on Earth in recorded time (VEI=6) and destroyed much of Krakatau Island, leaving only a remnant. Since 1927, small eruptions have been frequent and have constructed a new island, Anak Krakatau (Son of Krakatau). The earthquake occurred at 3.244°N, (3°14’38”) 95.825°E (95°49’30”) and Anak Krakatau is located at 16.7°S (16°42’), 105.4°E (105°24’). The distance between Krakatau and the epicenter of that earthquake was 2454.094 kilometers; 1524.903 miles. There was probably no connection.

You did note that the 1883 eruption was the same VEI as the eruption on the Long Valley caldera, right? And since that’s the case, The Three Amigos were probably looking at a period of 2-3 years of reduced sunlight, the blink of an eye in the history of a 4 billion year old planet. This wasn’t the day after tomorrow, it was today and the reality of the situation was that things would still grow. Maybe they’d have to use shorter season varieties for a year or two but that wasn’t a big deal. In that movie the climate change happened over night, but it was only a movie. And this wasn’t a climate change anyway. How many years that the US been in a drought and nobody said anything about a climate change? Maybe, with a little bit of luck there wouldn’t be that climate change that had been forewarned.

And maybe there wouldn’t be any more wars for a few centuries or acts of terrorism. Things have a way of evening out. The mad rush towards Armageddon was the result of man’s inability to get along with his fellow man. The mad rush towards possible extinction was the result of man’s inability to get along with nature. Who was to say what it would be like in 100, 1,000 or even 100,000 years when Yellowstone blew its top? Maybe it wouldn’t make any difference because by then maybe mankind had obliterated itself. Or maybe an asteroid the size of the Moon had slammed into the planet and formed another asteroid belt.

Spock was right, you know, there are infinite possibilities. All we can do is be good little scouts and Be Prepared.

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